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ABSTRACT

Mark is the central character in this story designed to help adolescents formulate a philosophy of values. The story is well suited for use in high school social studies courses and/or in philosophy or guidance units. Mark's thoughts and actions are reported as he interacts with his family, friends, acquaintances, and individuals of authority within his school and community. The story line centers on Mark's experiences during high school. Because many of the experiences will be familiar to a wide audience of adolescents, it is hoped that they will be able to relate to them and draw meaningful value lessons from them. The story line centers on Mark's experiences trying to explain missing books to the school librarian, denying vandalism to the police, sharing hopes and problems with his peers, and contributing input to a family decision regarding a move to another city. Issues brought out in these and other adventures include rights of citizens in a democratic society; rights and responsibilities of an individual to family, school, and community; decision-making processes in personal and social contexts; inequality in society; conflicts between people in different strata of society; and gaps between youthful idealism and adult conservatism. (DB)

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MARK

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CHAPTER ONE

Mark Jahorski was running to school. He seldom walked if it was possible to run; and he seldom jogged — his usual pace was a sprint. When he would get wherever it was he was going, he'd steady himself against a wall, panting and gasping.

"You're so stupid to knock yourself out like that," his twin sister, Maria, would say to him. But Mark rarely bothered to reply. He'd just stare coldly at her, and then, when he felt somewhat rested, he'd be off and running again.

He passed the Parkinson house, with the basketball hoop over the garage doors. Two boys were fighting on the driveway under the hoop. Mark knew them; they were fifth-graders. "What're you fighting about?" he called out, after he had paused for a moment to catch his breath.

The two boys began to circle each other, watching one another intently. Neither replied to Mark's question.

"Just for no reason?" Mark persisted. He would have moved on, but something in the taller boy's face, a momentary shadow of misery, made him linger.

"He called me a stupid jackass," said the taller boy.

"Why did you call him that?" Mark asked the other boy, and promptly received the answer he expected, "Because he *is* one." The shorter, stockier boy grinned as he said it.

The blows resumed, then, after a minute or so, the two combatants tired and squared off menacingly again.

"I get called stupid all the time," Mark said, addressing his words to the taller boy. "It doesn't mean anything to me." Then he tried another tack. "How do you *know* he's a stupid jackass?" he inquired innocently. He stood under the basket, his hands in the pockets of his jeans.

"I can tell just by looking at him," said the shorter boy.

"Well, when you look at him, what do you see that tells you what he is?"

"I ain't no jackass," said the taller boy. "He says that one more time, I'll moosh his face in!"

"You don't have to be able to say what you see," the smaller boy told Mark. "You can just know it. I can take just one look at him and I know it." Then he added, "He acts like all stupid jackasses act."

The boys began flailing at each other again. Mark shrugged and started out again for school.

On Maple Street he slowed to a trot, turned up the long concrete walk that led to the high school and yanked open the heavy front door. He would have gone directly to his locker, but was unable to pass the heated argument Laura and Millie were having, without stopping. "I tell you, I saw it on the TV," Laura insisted. (She called it "the TEE-vee.") "They say some sharks are mammals, maybe."

"Oh, that's just so silly!" Millie squeaked. "I don't know when I've heard anything so silly! Everybody *knows* sharks are fish and whales are mammals. *Everybody* knows!"

Laura sniffed with annoyance. "Why are you dragging whales in?"

Mark grinned.

"Just because *all* whales are mammals," Laura went on, "it doesn't mean *only* whales are mammals. Anybody can tell you, whales and sharks are a lot alike."

"Sure," Millie replied. "They both live in the water. Big deal! And neither one has feet."

"Hey, Laura," said Mark, thinking it best to intervene. "What Millie means is, none of those things matters much. There are similarities that *aren't* important, and there are differences that *are*."

"Like what?" Laura demanded.

'Aw, you know them as well as I do," Mark replied. "Whales nurse their young; sharks don't. Whales are warm-blooded and breathe air; sharks are cold-blooded and breathe water. Those are things that really count."

"Mark," Laura countered, her eyes flashing, "who decides which things count? You? You always think you're so smart!" She tossed her hair back over her shoulder, glared at him a moment longer, and then stalked off.

"Hey, wait up, don't get mad," Millie called after Laura, almost having to trot to keep up with her. "Besides, what's your hurry? You don't want to be early to Social Studies, do you?"

Laura ignored Millie's question. "That Mark! He thinks he's so cool! I'd like to see his face the day he finds out about Lisa."

"Oh, *I* wouldn't," Millie murmured. Then she added timidly, "And anyhow, if maybe some sharks *aren't* fish, who'd know the difference?"

ii

"You seen Lisa?" Mark asked Millie. The bell had rung, and she wasn't in the room. Millie shook her head. She wasn't about to tell Mark that she saw Lisa and Greg Marston heading toward Pete's.

As usual, it was hard to tell at just what point the class began. Ms. Williams had been standing near the blackboard talking to Randy. Then Tony and Fran came over, and a few more students got involved in the discussion, too, so pretty soon the whole class was in on it. Gradually the ones who were standing around took their seats, but they continued talking. Although there were several eddies of conversation, all the students were talking about pretty much the same subject.

Randy had used the expression "the free world," and Fran wanted to know which countries were members of the free world, and which ones weren't.

"We can't say what 'the free world' is," Harry protested, "until we know for sure what the word 'free' means."

"Aw, since you don't know, I'll tell you what it means," Mickey replied. "Wherever people make the laws they live by, they're free." Then he added, "Of course, you realize, there ain't no such place."

"You're talking about democracy," said Laura.

For a moment, no one said anything. Then Ms. Williams asked, "What's democracy?"

Laura tossed her head back a bit defiantly. "Democracy's where people live by laws they make. So people in democracies are free."

Mark looked aggrieved. "Hold on — just a second — not so fast. You can't just take any old reason and say that's the thing that counts. There are lots of ways democracies are different from other kinds of governments. But who says the one you picked is the only important thing to be considered?"

"Mark's right, Laura," said Tony. "When you're talking about democracy and freedom — complicated stuff like that — there are lots of things you have to take into account."

"Like whether or not a country has a constitution," suggested Jane.

"Sure," added Tim, "and how about representative government?"

"They're things to consider," Laura conceded.

"Sure!" Mark was surprised to find himself in agreement with Laura, for a change. "They're considerations. But how important are they? Are they decisive?"

Jill looked around at the class, then soberly remarked, "The only thing that's important enough to be called decisive is majority rule."

Immediately Fran responded, "That's not so! What's decisive is minority rights!" She stared at Jill for a moment, then turned to the teacher. "Ms. Williams, if there's some consideration that you should always take into account, and it's so important that it's really decisive, isn't there a word for it?"

This was Ms. Williams' first year of teaching, and she was sometimes very guarded. "A word?" she asked with a frown. "Such as what?"

Suki raised her hand unsurely. "Isn't there a word, 'criterion'?"

"Sure!" Harry agreed. 'Criterion'! The plural is 'criteria'."

"Okay, okay," Mark said excitedly, "look, let's say we've got two criteria. Forget about the others for right now. We've got two criteria of democracy, let's say: majority rule and minority rights. So which one of them is it going to be?"

"It doesn't have to be either one," said Tony calmly. "It could be neither."

"Or it could be both together," Harry added. "There are four possibilities."

"But how do we choose among them?" Mark persisted.

Then Harry said slowly, "Is it possible, Ms. Williams, that when we have a bunch of criteria, and we have to select from among them — is it possible that we need still *another* criterion to be able to decide which of the first bunch we should pick?"

Ms. Williams pursed her lips for a moment, then responded, "I don't see that you have much choice. How can you choose, unless you have a criterion to guide you?"

"So it just goes on endlessly!" Mark exclaimed, his face betraying his disappointment. "I thought that once we figured out what the important considerations were, then we'd have a rule for making decisions. But it's not like that at all. All it's like is that cereal box they used to have, it was a Quaker Oats box, and it had a picture of a man holding a box of Quaker Oats, which had a picture of a man holding a box of Quaker Oats, and on and on."

"But it doesn't *have* to be that way!" exclaimed Fran. "Maybe in theory it does. But in practice, no. It doesn't go on endlessly. When we keep in mind what it is we're trying to do, it helps us sort out our reasons. Then when we have to make decisions, we just go ahead and make them, and we go with the best reasons we have."

"The best reasons we have — right," said Harry. "And those are our criteria."

Later, as the class filed out the door, Jill said to Laura, "When do you think Lisa's going to tell Mark?"

"Tell Mark? Why should she? Maybe she figures she can keep them both."

"Keep them both? Naaah. She's got to decide on one or the other."

"And the criterion will be which one she likes more, right?"

"Sure. But I'll bet there's something else she's taking into account. Both those guys have awfully hot tempers. Either one she dumps, it'll be someone with a short fuse who might just explode. If she were here, I'd warn her — watch it!"

"So it's like I said," Laura commented with a grin. "She's got a real good reason for trying to keep them both."

iii

"I suppose you're going to basketball practice now," Lisa said to Mark.

"Sure," he replied, looking at Luther and Tony waiting for him in the corridor. To himself, he said, "She knows I always go to basketball practice after school. Why does she ask?" It didn't occur to him that Lisa wanted to talk to him.

"Why is it that that game makes no sense to me?" she wondered aloud, then promptly regretted what she'd said when she saw Mark's face begin to form a frown.

"It's a good game," Mark said lamely.

"Is it that you don't have to think when you play?" she blurted out. It sounded worse than she'd intended.

He was immediately defensive. "No, that's not it! You *do* think when you're playing basketball. Every move, you have to know what you're doing. In fact, that's what's so beautiful about it: on the court — doing and thinking, they're one and the same. What else can you say that about?"

Lisa didn't respond. She wasn't able to appreciate Mark's passion for basketball, and his explanations of why he liked it only seemed to make matters worse.

"Look," he said, "they're waiting for me. I'll see you tonight, okay?"

She shook her head. "I've got so much work to do —"

Mark looked unperturbed. "Okay, see you tomorrow." And he was off.

After the basketball practice session, he was exhilarated rather than tired, and raced all the way home. He found his sister, Maria, alone in the apartment, waiting for him. If he hadn't been still thinking about the corner shot he'd made, he'd have noticed how sober her face was.

"Mark!" she exclaimed. "Mom came home, and had to go right back out. She's got something to tell you!"

"What about?"

"National Textile's moving."

"Moving? I don't get it. How can they move?"

"They can, all right, and they're going to, Mom says. Halfway across the country. In six months."

"But they've got that big plant! And they must have thousands of employees!"

"Yeah, but they say it's cheaper elsewhere."

"But we'd all stay here, right? I mean, Mom doesn't have to go with them. She could find work here, right?"

"I guess it's not that simple. She says she has lots of 'seniority,' whatever *that* is, and she'd lose it if she didn't go. I guess once you've worked your way up to being some kind of executive, you don't want to have to go back to the secretarial pool."

"But what about Dad? He can't just pull up and go, just like that! What about *his* job?"

Maria shook her head and frowned. Mark noticed only then, for the first time, that she'd been crying. "That's just it," she tried to explain. "There seems to be some sort of problem, but I can't understand it. I mean, at work, in the library, there never seem to be any promotions. So he just stays in the same place, year after year. Sure, he never says anything about it, but it's true just the same. So maybe he figures he couldn't be worse off somewhere else."

"But — but —" Mark sputtered, "it's ridiculous! It's just crazy! This stupid society: either things are at a standstill or they're moving all around. It doesn't make any sense either way."

Later, when Mr. and Mrs. Jahorski got home, they confirmed what Maria had already told Mark. Dinner that evening was a quiet affair, almost solemn, although Mr. Jahorski kept trying to point out the brighter side of things.

That night, Mark tossed sleeplessly in bed. It had hit home that he was going to have to leave Lisa.

iv

Whatever it was that Lisa had wanted to discuss with Mark, she was in no frame of mind to bring it up once he told her about the likelihood of his having to move. Her thoughts tumbled over one another, and there was little comfort to be had from any of them. One said, "This is your punishment for Greg." And then another, even more disturbing, told her: "It's an opportunity, girl; take it. You've been wanting to get rid of Mark for a long time, but you wouldn't admit it to yourself. Now, what does it matter?" And yet another inner voice said, "It's Greg who means nothing to you. One of these days he'll be off chasing someone else, and Mark will leave, and you'll have no one." She wondered what she could do to keep herself from thinking.

But the following Wednesday, she let the cat out of the bag. Mark said to her, "I'll have to pick you up a little earlier Saturday night. They've changed the starting time of the movie. So I'll be there at seven."

"But — but —" Lisa stammered. "Mark, you didn't say anything about us going to a movie Saturday night. It's not regular — how could you take it for granted like that?"

It was his turn to be astonished. "Don't you remember?" he reminded her, "We said we'd go to the opening of the next Woody Allen film. We even talked about it."

Now it came back to Lisa, and she felt almost ill. How could she have forgotten? But she felt she had to bring the matter to a head. "I'm sorry. Somehow I forgot. But I still can't go with you."

"You can't? How come?"

"I just can't."

"But why?"

"Why do I have to give a reason? I just can't!"

"What else do you have to do?"

He was standing so close, towering over her, that she couldn't look up at him, so she looked down, but she didn't want to look down, she wanted to look at him straight. Then she forced herself to say, because the pretence had become intolerable, "I promised Greg Marston I'd go out with him."

"Greg Marston!" he gasped. All he could add was, "That creep?" He felt stunned.

Lisa nodded but remained silent.

"But why?"

"I just want to, that's all."

"Because he's a senior and has a car on Saturday nights?"

"Oh, Mark," Lisa protested, while silently wondering if the accusation had any truth in it.

"Are you telling me —" he struggled to formulate his question. "Are you telling me you think we should break up?"

She looked up sharply. "Did I say that? All I'm saying is, we're not married or anything. Why can't I go out when I please with anyone I want to? Just because I want to talk to someone else once in a while, does it have to change anything between *us*?" Pitiful, she told herself; what a weak argument! She looked gloomily at the ground, and one thought hung in her mind: "So this is how it ends."

"Greg Marston!" he exclaimed with repugnance.

"You don't even know him!" Lisa protested. "I'd like you to meet him. I'll bet you'd like him!"

That was the last straw. Mark had an image of Greg sitting behind the wheel of his car, grinning and making an ugly gesture at him. Had Greg actually been there at that moment, Mark was enraged enough to have hit him. But to Lisa he could do nothing. Furious, choked up, helpless, he could only stalk away in silence.

V

The change in Mark was evident enough. Earlier, Maria had been puzzled by certain inconsistencies in his behavior: for example, how docile he was at home, and how critical he was of everything at school. But now the pendulum of his changes began to swing more dramatically. One day he would appear in school in rumpled denims, hair unkempt, noisy and boisterous. The very next day he would be back wearing a shirt and tie (usually the loudest, most garish tie he could find), hair slicked back with some kind of goo, and almost mechanically correct in his behavior. But he confided in no one, and his classmates were unable to surmise his thoughts. He kept to himself, even when he was with his friends. After a while his classmates became used to his oddities, knowing, as they did, the stress he had been under.

In the little more than a year that Mark had been in high school, there had been no incidents such as might have led him into conflict with the school administration. If he was openly critical at times, so were many other students. But as his non-conformities became more pronounced, there was some concern among his friends that the school might not be willing to indulge all of his eccentricities.

At this moment he was in the library, staring morosely, for no particular reason, at the back of Randy's head. Suddenly the librarian appeared in front of him, cutting off his line of vision. Mark tried peering around her, but it was no use. She insisted on seeing him in her office. He went along nonchalantly, confident there was nothing amiss in which he might be involved.

"Mark," she said firmly, "these reserve books that are charged out to you — I don't know how you were allowed to take out so many. But they were charged out for overnight loan, and that was two weeks ago." She waved a handful of withdrawal slips at him. "You haven't brought any of them back. Where are they?"

He stared at her speechless, his mouth half-open. For the first week after he'd discovered that the books were missing from his locker, he'd worried about it every day. But as the days passed, he worried less and less, until now it had almost totally slipped his mind. All he could stammer, almost incoherently, was, "I p-put them in my locker."

"Well," said the librarian, "may I have them now?"

"Mrs. Gratz," said Mark, more loudly that he'd intended, "they're not there."

"If they're not there, then where are they?" She spoke slowly, her voice even and flat.

"I don't *know* where they are!" he almost shouted. "I can't find them."

The rising tone of Mark's voice caused a number of students to look up from their reading. It was Mark's misfortune that the principal, Mr. Swing, had been standing in the doorway waiting to talk to the librarian, and had overheard the whole conversation.

"Do you realize," said Mr. Swing in his most steely voice, "that you're disturbing everyone in this library?"

Mark looked at him almost wildly. "What *is* this —" he started to say, no less loudly than before.

The principal regarded him coldly. "That'll be enough of that," he said. "You're Mark Jahorski, aren't you?"

Mark stared at him. His lips moved, but anything he might have said was inaudible.

Mrs. Gratz confirmed the identification with a quick nod. "Mark Jahorski," she said.

"All right, Mark," said Mr. Swing, "until you bring those books back, no more extracurricular activities for you."

"But I don't have them to give back," Mark started to explain, and then another thought hit him. "The game!" he almost shouted. "Tomorrow night's basketball game! I'll miss it!"

"Not if you bring the books back," responded Mr. Swing, and he motioned to Mrs. Gratz to follow him to his office. Mark, looking very distraught, rushed from the library, leaving his books and notebook on the table at which he'd been sitting with Laura and Jill. The girls had seen and heard all that had happened.

"I don't think Mrs. Gratz meant for it to work out that way," mused Jill.

"Of course not," snapped Laura. "But that's old Swing for you — shape up or ship out."

"Poor Mark! He's been having it rough."

"I know," Laura replied. "I hope he can hold himself together until things get better."

"What d'you mean by that?"

"I mean, I hope he doesn't flip out."

vi

It was 10:15 in the evening. On the other side of the field, in the gymnasium, the basketball game was in its fourth and final quarter. The two policemen, sitting in their darkened car in front of the high school, could only indistinctly hear the frenzied shouts of the crowd which drifted across the field. They got out of the car and proceeded up the walk to the building. Now that, for budgetary reasons, the night watchmen had been discontinued, it was up to the police, on their regular tours of duty, to provide whatever security the school buildings needed through the night.

They had only to shine their flashlights on the front door to discover that something was amiss: the front pane closest to the inside handle had been broken from the outside. As they entered the lobby, they saw that the glass-encased photographs of the series of school superintendents stretching back to 1932 had been ripped from the walls and smashed on the floor.

"There are those who steal but don't destroy," muttered one of the policemen, "and there are those who destroy but don't steal."

As they moved quickly through the building, they encountered room after room in which chairs and desks had been overturned, paint smeared on blackboards, threats scrawled on walls, and windows smashed. Then they heard a noise from the back of the building, as if someone were running down a flight of steps from the second story.

Two corridors led to the back, so the policemen separated. A few moments later, as they converged from different directions upon the rear door of the school, they caught sight of someone running outside into the back court. But the court was enclosed: garages and a high concrete block wall, together with the angled science wing of the high school, made it a natural trap for the fugitive. The flashlights intersected upon him with perfect precision.

He was cowering in a corner. When one of the policemen said to him quietly, "What's your name, kid?" he simply replied, "Mark Jahorski," and allowed himself to be led back to the police car, still trying to shield his face with his arms.

CHAPTER TWO

The vandalism at the high school wasn't all that happened: the basketball game that same evening ended in a near-riot. Whether or not there was any connection between the two events, the police were unsure. The newspapers the next day reported that both had taken place "within the same time frame," and left it to their readers to conjecture about whether and how one might have caused or led to the other.

Nor was it clear to what extent, if any, the controversy surrounding Jane Starr had contributed to the fracas. Jane had publicly complained that she had been excluded from the basketball team just because she was a girl. "I'm taller and faster than some of the guys on the team, and I'm a better shot, so how come I'm not in the line-up?" she remarked to the reporter from the school paper, and her comments had been quoted in the issue that came out the previous day. Consequently, on the evening of the game, there were two pickets at the entrance to the gym, protesting Jane's exclusion.

But a more significant factor was that the referees for the game were inexperienced substitutes. The scheduled referees — all three of them — were to have come from a neighboring community, but the car they were driving in was involved on the way in a minor accident, and although no one was seriously injured, it was enough to prevent their appearance at the gymnasium. Consequently, some replacements had to be chosen, and those who were selected — largely because they had once been basketball players themselves — were not always sure of the rules of the game. One of them, moreover, turned out to have an extremely short temper. He and the coaches of both teams engaged in continual bickering, which irritated him to a point where he expelled them both from the game. That was in the third quarter. In the fourth quarter, some of the fans started throwing paper cups and empty soft-drink cans onto the basketball court, so that the game had to be held up on several occasions. The players of both teams repeatedly asked the crowd to be more orderly, but with a minute to go in the game, the referees made a particularly unpopular decision, and the air was filled with debris. Then a pop can sailed through the air and caught Tony on the forehead, cutting a gash just above his glasses. For a moment there was a hush, and then the stands erupted in waves of pushing and shoving, there were screams, and a rush for the exits. Apart from Tony, no one was hurt, but the breakdown of order — and the panic which many spectators experienced for a few moments — resulted in considerable indignation. This was further fueled when word spread that the high school had been vandalized.

Mark, meanwhile, was able to call his parents from the police station, and he was released in their custody. The next day they returned to the courthouse, and found Mr. Swing and Ms. Williams had arrived before them, and were conversing in hushed tones in the corridor.

"What happens now?" Mrs. Jahorski asked nervously. "A hearing?"

"Not exactly," Mr. Swing replied. He appeared somewhat shaken, and his tone lacked its customary severity. "There's a special procedure for matters of this kind. Instead of using the juvenile courts, cases like these are referred for investigation to certain retired judges who have the time and interest to look into these matters in an unhurried way. If that's how this case will be handled, I think Mark will be very fortunate."

At that point the bailiff appeared, and conducted them to a room which he identified as "Judge Bertoia's chambers." There was a huge, comfortable sofa on which Mark and his parents were seated. Ms. Williams, Mr. Swing, and Judge Bertoia sat in three great armchairs, upholstered in the same red leather as the sofa, partially facing the Jahorskis and partially facing each other.

Judge Bertoia was a short, chunky man with a thick neck and a mane of white hair. His eyes were almost completely obscured by his thick bifocals. This disturbed Mark, who was prepared for a judge who would seem either hostile or kindly. An inscrutable one would be difficult. But the more Mark struggled to size up his questioner, the less success he seemed to have.

"Mark," Judge Bertoia said, after he had exchanged some preliminary pleasantries with Mr. Swing, "you seem to be in a bit of trouble, isn't that so?"

Mark nodded.

"But you claim to be completely innocent, right?"

Again Mark nodded.

"Well, now, suppose you tell me what happened."

"I left the basketball game early in the first quarter. For a while I ran around town.

Then I came back by the high school, and I happened to see the glass broken on the front door. I found the door open, so I went in to look around." Mark looked down at his hands. "Then I heard someone coming, and I realized I shouldn't be found there, so I started to run."

"You're on the basketball team, I understand."

"Right, I'm a guard. But I was suspended. I couldn't play."

"Why were you suspended?"

Mark glanced at Mr. Swing. "Because I didn't return some reserve books that were overdue," he muttered. Then he added heatedly, "If you ask me, someone swiped them."

The judge paused, then remarked, "We'll go into that at another time. For now, let me ask you this: you wanted your team to win, didn't you?"

"Sure!"

"And yet you couldn't stay and watch the game?"

"That's right. I couldn't stand watching it. But I started to go back."

"And when you see broken windows and unlocked doors, you always take it on yourself to investigate? It wouldn't occur to you to call the police?"

Mark was silent. His parents looked at him, their faces tense and anxious, but he studied his hands and said nothing. There were many additional questions, most of which Mark was able to answer. But there were more than a few to which he gave no response.

Suddenly he looked up at the judge defiantly. "I knew it would go this way! You're just out to pin something on me, the way Mr. Swing did with the books!"

Judge Bertoia leaned forward and asked softly, "You're a victim, is that it?"

Mark shrugged.

"A victim of circumstances, perhaps?" the judge asked, with a little smile.

Mark drew back. "Circumstances? Look at Jane Starr. Was she a victim of circumstances? No, she was a victim of a policy in the school to exclude girls from the basketball team — a social policy!"

"Aha!" Judge Bertoia exclaimed, slapping his hand hard on the leather arm of his chair. "So that's it! You think you're a victim of *society,* is that right?"

There was an uneasy silence. Then Ms. Williams spoke up. "Judge Bertoia, I—I'm not sure what you're trying to establish. But I hope you don't put too much weight on that word, 'society.' It's just something we've been talking about a lot in social studies."

"Young lady, let me tell you something," the judge responded. "Practically every young person who comes in here tells me the same story. They all claim to be 'victims of society.' But what does that *mean*? That society has *attacked* them? How can that be?" He paused to blow his nose in a huge handkerchief, then continued. "There's something else that bothers me. Muggings! Vandalism! They make no sense! I can understand their robbing someone, but why beat them up? I can understand stealing property, but why should anyone just want to destroy it?"

"I'm sure there are resentments—" Ms. Williams began.

"Of course there are resentments!" the judge snorted. "But what causes them? Why do these young people feel *outside* society — as if they're not a part of it? Why do they think society's laws don't apply to them? Are they in any way different from the rest of us?"

Mr. Swing said in a low voice, "We've got to find out what they resent, and why."

The social studies teacher frowned. "I'm afraid I don't follow you."

Bart shook his pipe at her. "What I'm thinking is, it's as if they have some kind of secret, these young people. And I can't figure out what it is. I question them and question them, but they tell me nothing. I've *got* to study them more closely!" He paused, and his eyes narrowed. "You say you teach social studies?"

"That's right."

"And you're studying society, you said. What aspects of society?"

"The forces that hold it together, and the forces that threaten to pull it apart."

"What if—" the judge began to say, then turned to address his question to Mr. Swing. "What if the sophomore social studies class were to acquire a new pupil..."

Mr. Swing caught the meaning of the judge's question immediately. "For the rest of the year?" he asked.

"For the rest of the year," the judge replied.

"I don't understand," Ms. Williams remarked, shaking her head. "Who's the new pupil?"

"His name's Bartolomeo," said the judge, with a faint smile. "Bartolomeo Bertoia."

As they stood up to leave, Mr. Swing turned to the judge and asked, "Do you really think young people have some sort of secret?"

"It's my suspicion," the judge replied, choosing his words slowly, "that they're different from us in some strange, secret way, and that's what I mean to find out: what it is that makes *them* different from *us*."

"They're *not* different," Ms. Williams said. "They're just younger."

In the elevator, the principal and the teacher exchanged a few words in low voices. All that Mark caught of the conversation was Ms. Williams saying, "I don't think I can go through with this...."

ii

"Hey, Jill," Mickey called out, "you going to the carnival tonight?"

"I don't think so. I've got two assignments to work on."

"Aw, c'mon, have some fun."

"Well-l-l—" Jill hesitated. Then she brightened. "There's Millie. Let me find out if she's...."

"Aah, forget it— why are you asking *her*?" Mickey groaned.

Jill ignored him. "Millie, are you going to go to the carnival tonight?"

Millie laughed. "Gee, I wasn't planning to. But why not?"

Mickey stared at Jill in disbelief. She looked back at him coolly, then went on chatting with Millie.

"I'll be right back," said Mickey, and raced off. A few minutes later he was back, with Tony a few steps behind, looking doubtfully at Mickey, and then at the girls. "How do you like that?" Mickey announced proudly. "No sweat. Double date."

Millie looked up at Tony and smiled. "How's the air up there?" she inquired. Tony grinned and said nothing. Other people had made the same remark to him. But he noted that he didn't mind when Millie said it.

Jill had to admit the carnival was fun. They stuffed themselves on popcorn and cotton candy, threw baseballs at wooden milk bottles until Millie won a golden panda, and had ride after ride on the merry-go-round. It was the old-fashioned kind of calliope that played the "Blue Danube" and other waltzes while you rode up and down on prancing horses, or charging tigers. And half-way through the ride, a long wooden arm would be swung out so you could reach out and grab a ring. And of course, if your ring turned out to be brass, it meant a free ride. But no one got a brass ring, and on one swing past, Mickey almost fell off his horse while trying to get two rings in quick succession. Then they tired of the safer rides and turned to the Bullwhip, the Stinger, and the awesome Rodeo Rocket.

After about two hours, they'd had enough of the carnival, and Mickey suggested they go somewhere and sit down. Since no one had any ideas of where to go, there was no objection to Mickey's leading the way. Before long they found themselves crossing the playground of a grammar school. Half-way around the school, they came to the loading dock used by delivery trucks. It was a long wooden platform, about chest high, with a set of stairs at either end. Since Mickey and Jill sat down on the stairs at one end, there seemed to be no reason for Millie and Tony not to sit down on the other.

For a while, no one could find anything to say; the silence was broken only by occasional chirping sounds from Millie, which the others recognized as her distinctive way of giggling. When Mickey moved a bit closer to Jill, she moved somewhat further away. "I hope this doesn't keep up," Mickey said to himself. "It's a long platform."

"Millie," Jill called out in her warm and rather husky voice. "On the merry-go-round tonight, I rode only wild animals and you rode only tame ones."

"Mmmm, that's right," Millie replied. She didn't pay much attention to Jill's remark, as she was busy trying to guess whether she was close enought to Tony to lean her head against his shoulder.

Tony laughed. "Y'know, Jill," he said. "Some wild animals are very tame and some tame ones can get pretty nasty." Tony was amused at the way they were calling across the platform to one another.

"Like which ones?" Jill echoed.

Mickey could no longer stay out of the discussion. "Like man!" he said. "Look at the wars people fight! And in fact, the more that animals live together, the more warlike they get. Look at ants: they're social creatures, and they fight wars just like men do."

"Aw, Mickey," said Tony, "not so fast. Men and ants may both be social creatures, but in very different ways."

"Don't you think I know that?" Mickey asked. He was a little impatient as a result of Jill's evasiveness. "Ants are social by instinct. It's natural for them. But human society is something human beings have thought up all by themselves. It's not natural— it's artificial."

Millie sighed. "Mickey," she said petulently, "I don't get you. People naturally belong to families or to tribes, it seems to me, so they must also belong to society naturally. How could they just make society up— like it was something they invented?" Her head drooped wearily, and somehow just managed to find an unyielding shoulder on which to support itself.

Mickey glanced over at Tony and Millie, then tried putting his arm around Jill's waist, but she quickly and firmly removed it. It was Mickey's turn to sigh. His mind moved back to the discussion. "If people were just left to their instincts, they'd kill each other off in no time flat. But their *minds* tell them they better lay off. So they agree not to fight one another."

"The other night in the gym," mused Millie, "it was like going back to the jungle there for a few minutes."

"Where there's no government, there's anarchy," said Mickey gloomily.

Again Tony had to laugh. "Aw, Mickey, that's like saying when there's no day, there's night!"

Jill laughed too. "Sure. It's like saying, if there's less and less ocean, there's more and more land." Then she became a bit more serious. "You know, Mickey, I can't agree with you at all, but I just don't know why. You seem to think we're all like wild animals in the jungle, and that all we want to do is fight with one another. I can't tell you just what it is that makes you wrong, but I know you're wrong just the same." She stood up and added, a bit less severely, "C'mon, how about walking me home?"

Mickey grabbed the railing, pulled himself up to his feet, and brushed off the seat of his pants. "But what about them?" he asked, motioning with his head in the direction of Millie and Tony.

"Oh, them!" Jill smiled. "Let them alone. They're doing fine."

"Yeah," grumbled Mickey. "That's more than I can say for us."

iii

Although it pained Fran and Suki to see Lisa so weary and listless, they felt they could say nothing to her about Mark unless she first brought the topic up herself. But Lisa continued to be brooding and unresponsive. She seldom smiled, and her gray eyes were joyless. Even her hair had lost its usual sheen and curl, and hung dull and straight over her shoulders.

So they felt a bit encouraged when they found her in one of the aisles of the drugstore, weighing the competing claims on the cartons of two different brands of shampoo. Lisa looked up, showed no surprise at meeting them there, and remarked, "One claims to smell like new-mown hay, but how would I know what new-mown hay smells like? And this other one says it will make me look 'luminous and alluring.' Thanks a lot!"

Fran laughed. "One gives you the natural look, the other makes you an instant hit socially. See, those are the two big things in advertising: natural appeal and social appeal."

Lisa glanced vaguely at Fran, as if hardly following her reasoning. "Natural? Social? What're you talking about?"

Suki looked out the drugstore window, where the passersby were beginning to put up their umbrellas. "See," she said, "look at what they're doing. It could be either natural or social. When people put up their umbrellas to protect themselves from the rain, that's only natural. But if they do it because it's fashionable — like, putting up parasols because everyone else is doing it and it's stylish — then it's social."

Just then two boys on skateboards collided with one another. "There's another example," Fran said. "If they ran into each other because they didn't see each other, you could call it a natural fact. But if each one saw the other one coming, and each was trying to psych out the other, and they ran into each other because they miscalculated, then it would be a social fact."

Lisa shook her head as if she had been only half-listening, "I still can't figure out which of these two to take — the natural or the social."

"Why choose?" Fran asked lightly. "Why not try them both out?"

It was intended as a harmless pleasantry, but Fran's remark had for Lisa a special meaning, and she quickly looked away. Suki recognized that Fran's words had gone astray, so she took Lisa by the elbow and steered her gently in the direction of the ice cream fountain.

Suki and Fran ordered, but Lisa shook her head. "I don't feel like anything," she insisted.

Fran looked grimly at the counter attendant and nodded in Lisa's direction: "Give her a double malted. She looks like she's going to fall over any minute." The attendant looked inquiringly at Lisa, but she failed to protest.

Finally Lisa blurted out, "There's no way out. No way."

Her two companions could find nothing to say.

"One guy at a time wasn't enough for me."

Fran's eyes narrowed and she studied Lisa closely. "You put all the blame on yourself?"

"That's right," Lisa responded emphatically.

"For what?"

"For what's happened to Mark. Now, because of me, he'll have a criminal record."

"Oh, I don't think it's as bad as that," Fran replied quickly. "Even if that judge thinks he's guilty, vandalism isn't something criminal. And besides, that's assuming—"

"Fran's right," Suki interrupted vigorously, "that's assuming something no one has a right to assume — that Mark's guilty of having done something wrong."

The attendant brought two sodas and a double malted. Fran and Suki began stirring their sodas, but Lisa left her malted untouched.

At length, Lisa remarked, "Maybe I'm not as sure about these things as you are. Maybe you have no problem believing someone is innocent when the evidence says they're guilty. But I do. I figured right away that Mark had — had just flipped out or something. And it's my fault. No, don't shake your heads, it really is — it's my fault."

"So you're putting yourself down," said Suki.

"Darned right I am. I'm disgusting."

"Even if it *was* Mark," objected Fran, "there were lots of things that could have helped cause it, not just you and Greg. What about his family's moving? What about old Swing barring him from the game?"

Lisa was at the point of tears, and couldn't answer. Then she shuddered slightly, and it seemed to break her trance. "Sure, everything piled up on him. But I was the last straw. Mark's always been sore at the way things are done—"

Fran interrupted Lisa with an impatient gesture, and then turned to Suki. "If we think Mark's in danger of getting railroaded, we should do something about it." She spun around the counter stool to face Lisa: "Where were you that Friday evening when all this happened?"

"I went to the basketball game."

"With Mark?"

"No."

"Then with Greg?"

"No, I went alone."

"You're not usually much interested in basketball."

"I went to find Mark so I could talk to him. But I couldn't see him at first, because he wasn't in the stands. Then, just after the game began, I caught sight of him leaving."

"So what did you do?"

"I started to follow him, but he was way ahead of me. I thought he might be going in the direction of the high school. Then I— then I lost him." Lisa's voice faltered, and she looked away.

"You lost him? How could that have happened?"

"It happened. I got sidetracked."

"But how?"

Lisa stood up. "I ran into Greg."

"What happened?" Fran demanded.

"I— I don't want to talk about it," Lisa faltered.

Fran shrugged and exchanged glances with Suki. Then Suki said, "What do you make of this judge wanting to sit in on our classes?"

"He figures he'll be able to understand how vandalism happens if he can just understand what young people think of society," Fran said mockingly. "But he's got it all wrong. He should study how society dumps on young people, and not just how they try to get back at it."

Suki gloomily nodded agreement. "It's snooping, that's what it is."

Fran added, "I'll bet he thinks there's some tie-in between what happened in the high school and the way we talk and criticize things in class. Wait— you watch. He won't just get Mark. He'll get *all* of us!"

iv

"Can you imagine," exclaimed Mrs. Stottlemeier, "my first niece, or nephew, or whatever it's going to be! And Harry — you'll have another cousin — how *about* that!"

Harry grinned and said nothing. But his father remarked, "All I've got to say is, it took Margaret long enough! A couple more years and she'd have missed out altogether. But now watch her have three or four in a row, one every year. That'd be just like your sister!"

"Oh, shush!" Mrs. Stottlemeier replied, reddening somewhat. She took a yellow paper napkin from the table, cleaned her glasses, and continued reading the letter, sniffling joyously between sentences:" 'It would be such a blessing if you could come take care of things even for just a few days, when I get home from the hospital. Hank's a dear, but he's really so helpless. And of course, if they're free, you could bring Sam and Harry too, but I know how busy Sam always is, and Harry's probably in school' —"

"Mom!" Harry interrupted. "We've got three days off the end of next week! Teachers' association meetings. That makes five days counting the weekend! If that's when you go, couldn't I go with you? Hey, I could use a break!"

Mrs. Stottlemeier turned and looked questioningly at her husband, who merely arched his brows in surprise for a moment, and then returned to trying to pry the back of his wristwatch off with his penknife. "This darn thing's always losing time," he remarked, just as if the look had not been directed at him.

"Weren't you telling me just the other day," Mrs. Stottlemeier said evenly, "that you have some vacation days coming to you? In fact, you said it could be three or four, or maybe even five!"

Her husband looked at her somewhat wearily. "As far as Harry's concerned, I've no objection to his going, but what makes you think Margaret's timing is going to coincide with the teachers' calendar? From her letter it sounds like it could be at least a month before she makes me an uncle."

Harry looked up alertly. "So you'll go! And I can go too if it's the end of next week! And we'll fly— there's a family fare, I'll bet, and—"

"Harry," said Mr. Stottlemeier, "you're building up all these expectations, and they're just not going to pan out! Believe me, Margaret was never on time for anything in her life. If she says one month, it'll be two or three!"

Harry regarded his father morosely. "I'm a sophomore in high school and I've never been on a plane. Can you imagine?'

"Oh, Sam," said Mrs. Stottlemeier, "stop teasing the boy." She turned to Harry. "It's very unlikely, Harry, but we can talk to the travel agency about how much it would cost — just in case."

Harry's luck held out. The call came from Hank early one morning the following week, and for a few hours there were some frantic preparations in the Stottlemeier household. Before long, they were at the airport terminal and, after what seemed to Harry an endless wait, they boarded the plane.

Seated next to the window, Harry could feel the excitement mount as the plane taxied into position for takeoff. Then the engines built up to a deafening roar and the plane began to move forward. Harry felt himself forced against the back of his seat. Outside, the airport began to drop away beneath the plane, and the surrounding warehouses and fields rose into view, stretching far out to the horizon. Little cars ran along little ribbons of roads, and a sluggish river snaked along between two ranges of hills which in turn gave way to a great stretch of flat farmland. Harry was entranced.

But as the plane droned on and the flat countryside six miles below him continued to be monotonously the same, Harry became more aware of the other passengers and the flight crew. One of the pilots walked through the cabin, and Harry regarded him with some awe.

"I'll bet it isn't easy, getting to be one of those," Harry said to his father.

"Well," Mr. Stottlemeier replied, you don't exactly get to be an airline pilot by winning a popularity contest. You have to be pretty experienced and pretty skillful to handle one of these big fellows."

"Dad, is that the way it should be with all jobs? I mean, like the president and everyone, instead of being elected, they should be picked from only those candidates who could pass a bunch of tough tests?"

"I'm afraid if you didn't let the people have a say in the matter, it would no longer be a democratic society."

Harry stared out the window for a few moments. Then he said, "But— we were talking about that in class the other day. And Fran said democracies aren't majority rule, they're minority rights."

Mr. Stottlemeier winced. "Get it straight, Harry — democracies are neither one nor the other of those. Those are just two ways we *test* to see if a country's a democracy."

"Test?" Then Harry brightened. "Oh, I know— we used the word 'criterion'."

"That's okay, too," his father allowed.

"And is having a constitution another criterion — or test?"

Mrs. Stottlemeier intervened. "When I went to school, we learned that there were democracies that didn't have constitutions, and there were countries that had constitutions that weren't democracies."

"Those were the days," said Mr. Stottlemeier, "when only boys were elected class president, and only girls were elected secretary-treasurer."

The plane began to skim over some great, creamy cloud-masses. Harry looked at them in fascination. Then there was nothing to see out the window but the interior of the cloud bank which they had now entered.

After a while, Harry remarked, "So the two main tests of whether a society's democratic are majority rule and minority rights, is that it?"

"They're the main ones, I would guess," said Mr. Stottlemeier. "So long as individual and minority rights are respected, you can leave everything else to the majority to decide."

"Everything else?" Harry echoed.

His father gave him a sidelong glance but said nothing.

"In class the other day," Harry continued, "the question came up of whether history repeats itself. And you can imagine, some of the guys in class wanted to take a *vote* on whether it did or didn't! Boy, how silly can you get?"

"You mean there are some sorts of questions that it's just wrong to try to decide by majority vote?"

"Sure there are," Harry exclaimed heatedly. "There's nothing urgent about deciding whether history repeats itself, so why rush into a vote on it? And what would a vote prove, anyhow?"

"But sometimes," his father said slowly, "a decision has to be made, because some action has to be taken, even though the evidence isn't all in. Take elections — you can't put them off indefinitely."

"I get it," said Harry. "It's not that voting is right or wrong in itself. It depends on the circumstances. If there's no need to make a decision, then, we should continue to investigate, but—"

At that moment, the voice of the stewardess interrupted Harry's remarks with the information that the plane was about to land, and that the passengers should secure their seat belts.

* * *

They were met at the airport by Hank and Andy, Hank's son by an earlier marriage. Andy was Harry's age. It had been some years since the last time they met, and they could hardly remember each other.

For a few minutes, Hank tried to conceal the surprise, but finally, his face beaming, he blurted out that Margaret had had a baby girl just the previous evening, and that she and the baby were fine. At that Mrs. Stottlemeier, her cheeks wet with tears, gave Hank a great hug, and Mr. Stottlemeier, beaming almost as broadly as Hank, shook his hand warmly.

"What's her name going to be?" Harry asked.

"Maureen," Hank replied. "We've named her Maureen. It was my mother's name."

Harry had hoped that the house in which he'd be staying the next few days would be a large and comfortable one, but it seemed to him rather small and crowded. Still, there was a guest bedroom set aside for his parents, and he was able to use the upper bunk in Andy's bedroom, where the two of them, now fast friends, stayed up late each night exchanging information about their schools, their friends, and the things one could do in their neighborhoods.

What surprised Harry most about his cousin were his firm convictions, so clearly expressed on so many topics. It seemed to Harry that whatever the subject they would discuss, Andy would have strong opinions about it. The very first evening, Andy had mentioned his intention of going to law school.

"There's a girl in our class who wants to become a lawyer," Harry responded, "but why do you want to become one?"

"Lawyers are the only people who can do anything about injustice," Andy responded quickly. "In fact, that's what law is — the search for justice."

Harry, in the upper bunk, pondered that thought for a moment, then replied, "Is everything people do a search for something?"

"Of course! Medicine's the search for health, science for truth, art for beauty—anything you name, it's something imperfect trying to achieve perfection. See, I admit, about the law, that it's imperfect. But if we had perfect laws, we'd finally have justice. Isn't that how you see it?"

Harry scratched his head. "I've never thought of things that way. I mean, there are better and worse ways of doing things. There are better and worse dentists and tennis players and scuba divers, but it doesn't make any sense to me to talk about the perfect scuba diver."

"But don't you agree that wherever there are good laws, there's justice?"

Harry thought about Andy's question for so long that Andy began to think he wasn't going to get an answer. At length, Harry remarked, "No, I'd say that wherever there's justice, there must be good laws. But it doesn't follow that wherever there are good laws, there's justice."

"Why not?" Andy demanded.

"Because, in a democracy, where things are done by voting, you can't hope to have perfection, no matter how good the laws are. You're just looking for policies that will let you go ahead, with the least harm to all."

"That's because," Andy retorted, "people don't know how to vote. They vote for whatever it is they want. So as a result, what does an election show: just the sum total of what people happened to want on that day?"

"What *should* an election show?" Harry inquired.

"People shouldn't merely vote for what they want! They should do what they know in their hearts is right! They should vote for what they *ought* to want!" It was quite late now, and Andy's voice betrayed weariness.

"But Andy," Harry protested, staring up at the ceiling, which was just a foot away from his nose, "Nobody's going to live the way he ought to live until he figures everyone else is going to do likewise."

"We don't have any choice," Andy answered. "It doesn't matter how other people live. We have to live the way we ought to — the right way — even in a world where everyone's living just the opposite."

"And do you know what the right way is?" Harry persisted in asking.

"Of course I do. We all do — we just don't want to admit it."

"Maybe there's something wrong with me," Harry muttered, "but things just aren't that clear to me." Since no answer came from Andy, Harry concluded that he'd dropped off to sleep.

* * *

Harry expected, as he followed the others into Aunt Margaret's hospital room, that she would be in bed with Maureen at her side. But she wasn't — she was sitting in a rocking chair, nursing Maureen. However, the conversation was as expected: "Isn't she darling! She's got your chin, Margaret! And Hank's nose! And such blue eyes! Look how she grips my finger — Harry, let her grip your finger and show you how strong she is!" Harry found a small stool in a corner and sat down on it, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible.

"C'mon up here," Hank said to Andy, who had been standing in the doorway. "Why are you standing out there?"

Andy swallowed hard, but he said nothing.

"Andy!" his father said, not loudly, but with more impatience.

"I've told you before," Andy replied, as if the words were being wrenched out of him, "there are too many people in the world already!"

He turned and ran down the hall. Hank moved to go after him, but Margaret put her hand on his arm and he stopped. She said merely, "Let me," handed him Maureen, and went off, somewhat unsteadily, down the hall.

She found Andy sitting on a landing in an emergency stairwell. He was just staring straight ahead. "It's the house, isn't it?" she asked. Andy continued to stare silently at the descending steps. "And you think that the more Hank cares for me and Maureen, the less he'll care for you, isn't that it?"

He looked straight at her for a moment, then looked away again. "I wanna be left alone. You *mind*?"

She sat down next to him. "Andy, Andy, do you know what a newborn child represents?"

"What?" he muttered.

"Hank and I— all our lives, society's been at work on us, molding us, shaping our minds, finding just the right niche for us and getting us to accept it. So don't think we don't admire you, the way you so grandly brush off the way things are, and demand that the world live up to your ideals."

Andy stared at her. She'd never talked to him like this before. "So what's a newborn child?" he demanded.

"Don't you see?" Margaret replied, "it would be so much easier for society if each child were born already brainwashed and conditioned. But instead, children are born full of healthy impulses. They're born ready to think and to think for themselves. Yet society has to do all that brainwashing all over again, with each growing child—" she stopped herself, then, after a moment, continued. "Andy, it's those who're newborn you should be concerned about, not us. What can *we* do? — our lives are set! But a newborn child has a whole new life ahead of it." Momentarily she closed her eyes, and Andy could see she was trembling. It was only with some effort that she was able to finish saying what she wanted to say: "It's not people like you who should resent an infant's coming into this world, Andy. It's people who fear fresh, imaginative thinking, people who hate whatever's different and original and free. Andy— the kind of world you want to see — if anyone represents hope for it, it's Maureen!"

After talking a while longer, they came back to the hospital room, where they found Harry, his face flushed, holding Maureen. He looked up and saw Andy. "Boy, is she

strong, Andy," said Harry. "When she gets hold of you, she really squeezes!"
"Well, sure, why not?" Andy responded. "She's my sister, isn't she?"

CHAPTER THREE

"Judge Bertoia— " Fran began, but she was quickly interrupted.

"Please call me Bart."

"We can't call you that."

"Why not?"

"We don't call Ms. Williams by *her* first name."

"That's between you and her. Besides, she's your teacher."

"So?"

"So I'm not a teacher. I'm here just like any other member of the class."

"That can't be so," remarked Tony. "You're a lot older than anyone else, and you've been through school before."

"Look," replied the judge, "did you read about that kid— what was his name? — Tommy something — Tommy Spivey? You remember — twelve years old and starting college?"

"Oh, *him*!" sniffed Fran. "First of all, he's a special case."

"And second of all," added Tony, "I've heard that, in lots of colleges, they call students by their *last* names."

"That's just my point," returned the judge. "If the professors in college call all the other students by their last names, why should they make an exception of this student

— just because he's a little younger — and call him by his first name?"

Tony had to agree, although reluctantly: "I guess, in college classes, to be consistent, he'd have to be called Mr. Spivey."

"Regardless of his age?"

"I guess so."

"So why can't I be treated the same as anyone else in this school, regardless of *my* age?"

The room was silent. Then Harry spoke up. "I don't think the two things can be compared."

"Why not?" the judge demanded.

"Well, you can't be treated like everyone else around here, because Mark's case is still in your hands."

The judge looked at Harry sharply. "I'm aware of that. But I've learned to avoid making snap decisions. I want to investigate this whole area. I see these individual cases of vandalism as just symptoms of a much larger problem."

Then Fran asked bluntly, "So why *are* you here?"

"I'm trying to figure out what's going on, that's all. The longer I stayed on the bench, the more I realized there were a lot of things I didn't understand. I promised myself that when I retired I'd do better. So that's why I'm here. I not only need an education — I need to find out what education's all about."

"I thought you were trying to find out about society," said Luther.

"I am — but I figure that one way of learning how a society works is to see what it lets young people find out about how it works."

Bill started to say something, but changed his mind. Then Tim observed, "You're starting too late."

The judge shrugged. "It's never too late—"

"No, I didn't mean it that way," Tim said quickly, "I meant, you shouldn't be starting in the sophomore year in high school. You should go all the way back to the beginning. It all starts in kindergarten."

"Nursery school," Jill called out.

"When you learn to think," Millie shrieked.

"Before, before," Suki said with a laugh. "It starts when you're born."

"Pre-natally, perhaps," murmured Ms. Williams, whereupon Mickey said something to Jane that made her snicker, so that Sandy kept asking her, in a half-whisper, "What'd he say? What'd he say?"

"I'm here to learn," the judge said. "I don't ask you to treat me any differently from the way you treat anyone else. And I promise that I won't drag things out any longer than necessary."

Fran looked dubiously at Tony. Maria sat very still, as if holding her breath, and Mark squirmed in his seat. Then Tony said to Fran, "What choice do we have?"

Fran nodded and looked at the judge. She wasn't smiling. But all she said was, "Okay, Bart, it's a bargain."

After class, Laura and Jill stood for a moment together in the corridor. "There's something I've *got* to tell you," whispered Laura. She waited until a group of freshmen had gone by. "Y'know, Eddie, the guy I've been going with?" Jill nodded. "Well, he told me last night that, at halftime during the basketball game that Friday night, he went out to the hall by the gym, and he happened to look across to the high school."

"So?"

"So there was a light on. And then he saw someone go past the lighted window. He said he'd forgotten all about it until last night."

"And the guy he saw in the window was Mark?" Jill asked.

"It wasn't a guy, that's just it," Laura replied slowly. "It was a girl."

ii

Jill, Millie and Maria emerged at a trot from the girls' locker room at the gym, dribbling the basketball among them as they ran. At the far end of the court they found a basket they could have to themselves, and for a while they took turns shooting, while waiting for the coach to call the teams together. But the coach was engaged in the seemingly hopeless task of settling a dispute between two freshman girls who were screaming threats of awesome violence at one another. Jill was amused at the girls' ingenuity. "Hey, listen," she said to Maria and Millie, "they never repeat themselves. If one says, 'I'll break your face!' the other one says, 'I'll crack your back.' It's like a game, the way they trade insults. The important thing is to keep coming up with something new all the time."

But Maria and Millie were hardly paying attention. Maria kept trying to shoot a basket, and Millie was guarding her, trying to prevent the shot. However ingeniously Maria dodged, ducked and feinted, Millie would be right there, her arms up to keep the ball from the basket. But finally Maria got the shot off, and it went in beautifully, without touching the rim. She and Millie fell exhausted in each other's arms and hugged each other enthusiastically. Then the three of them sat down cross-legged on the floor.

Millie looked at Maria with a little grin and asked, "Say, what's with you and Bill?"

Maria just grinned back and said nothing. But Jill chimed in and demanded to know the same thing. "Yeah, what's with you guys? C'mon now, really, what's going on?"

"We've had some dates," Maria acknowledged cautiously.

"How many?" Millie asked, making no effort to conceal her eagerness to find out. "*Tell* me!"

"Who counts?" Maria answered, and yet, at the very same moment, began counting on her fingers. After a bit of scowling and pondering, she announced, "Eight!" Then she added, "And each one was a little bit different!"

"Different? In what way?" Jill murmured, looking quite mischievous. "Like each of those insults was different?"

Maria knew her friends were trying to draw her out, but she really didn't mind, so she ceased being evasive. "Well," she recounted, "the first four times we didn't go to the movies, and the next four times we did."

"That's funny," said Jill. "Did you both want to go each time?"

"Not really," Maria answered. "In fact, it was always a little different. Sometimes we'd both want to go, and sometimes only one of us would want to go. And then there were times that neither of us wanted to go."

Millie borrowed a pencil and a piece of paper from a girl who was nearby. "I've just *got* to write this down!" she insisted. "It sounds like one of those weird patterns. Okay, now tell me how it was."

Maria shrugged. "I don't know what all the fuss is about, but okay. On the first date, neither of us wanted to go to the movies, so we ended up at O'Malley's Bowling Alley. On the second date, he wanted to go to the movies but I didn't, so instead we went to Grungy Gerty's Milk Bar. The next time, I was the one who wanted to go to the movies, but he didn't, so we hung out for a while at Disco Tech. And the fourth time, we both wanted to go, but we met Laura and her boyfriend, Eddie, and they persuaded us to go skateboarding with them." Maria laughed. "Bill spent practically the whole time picking me up off the floor!"

Millie was writing furiously. "Okay," she commanded, "now, what about the next four times?"

"Oh," said Maria, "like I said, each time we ended up going to the movies. First neither of us wanted to go; then only he wanted to; then only me; and finally we both wanted to."

"So!" exclaimed Millie, "you tried eight times, but it was only on the last time you succeeded."

"Huh?" said Maria. She glanced inquiringly at Jill, then back at Millie.

"I mean," Millie laughed, "it was only on the eighth try that you both got what you wanted. Look, let me show you." She passed the piece of paper over to Jill and Maria. "See," she said, "It's like 'the four possibilities'. But this time there are eight instead of four." This is what she'd written on the paper:

1st date—Neither wanted to go to the movies.	They didn't go to the movies.
2nd date—Only Bill wanted to go.	They didn't go to the movies.
3rd date—Only Maria wanted to go.	They didn't go to the movies.
4th date—Both wanted to go.	They didn't go to the movies.
5th date—Neither wanted to go.	They went to the movies.
6th date—Only Bill wanted to go.	They went to the movies.
7th date—Only Maria wanted to go.	They went to the movies.
8th date—Both wanted to go.	They went to the movies.

"Millie's right," said Jill. "All eight times are different, but it was only on the last time that you both got what you wanted."

Maria grinned at her friends. "Now that's just nonsense!" she exclaimed, stretching comfortably and looking as if she were about to purr. "We were together all those times, weren't we?"

iii

"Ms. Williams," Sandy called out, "since we call the judge by *his* first name, how about it if we call you by yours?"

"It's Wendy," whispered Maria. "That's her name — Wendy."

"The judge is a member of the class, and if he wants to be called by his first name, that's his privilege," the social studies teacher replied. "But I'm still your teacher, and I prefer to be called by my last name. Otherwise," she laughed nervously, "I'm afraid of losing what little authority I seem to have in this class!"

"Okay, but Ms. or Miss?" Millie asked.

"You might as well call me what I am," said the teacher. "I'm a Miss."

"Aw, no," Sandy exclaimed gallantly, "you're a hit!"

"See!" Fran laughed. "You've gained more than you lost. And that brings me to my question."

"What question?" Ms. Williams inquired.

"Well, we've been talkin'— you know, among ourselves — and we know you have the rest of the course planned out, but we wanted to ask you if you'd consider doing things a little different."

"Like what?"

"We want to know what society is—"

"—and what institutions are," interrupted Mickey.

"—and where one leaves off and the other begins," Randy added.

"But, in a way, that's what the course is *already* about," Ms. Williams insisted.

"Sure," Fran nodded. "In a way." She could sense that Bart was watching her attentively. "But maybe there are other ways we could try that would be more practical."

"Oh," Ms. Williams exclaimed, her face brightening. "I see what you mean— like field trips, and that sort of thing. And as a matter of fact, I *did* plan that we'd go to visit City Hall, to get a sense of the political process at work—"

Tony groaned, "City Hall?"

"To give you a first-hand acquaintance with the institutions that society is composed of."

"We and the school have already met," said Mark. "The school's a social institution. In fact, in some ways, I'll bet it's *the* social institution."

"And to give you a feeling for the economy as an institution," Ms. Williams went on, "I've planned a trip to the Dollar Savings Bank, and to the Vidco Transistor Corporation, and to the stockyards."

Randy exclaimed, "Oh, boy, the slaughterhouse!" and Millie countered with "Ugh!"

Fran looked troubled. "Uh— Ms. Williams — I don't think those things are quite what we had in mind."

"But you need to *see* them! Firsthand!" It was the teacher's turn to frown.

"Sure, although we've all seen a lot of that stuff already on TV or in the newspapers." Fran smiled uneasily. Getting Ms. Williams to give up her lesson plans was more difficult that Fran had expected.

"I think what Fran's saying," remarked Harry, "is that it's common knowledge what happens in slaughterhouses and banks and factories. We know they're there, and we know pretty much what goes on there. But we've never really had a chance to sit down and talk about all this stuff, do you know what I mean? Just to think about it and try to put it all together."

Bart smiled. "You're going to learn about the world out there by just sitting around here and thinking about it?"

Fran turned quickly to face him. "Why do we have to sit around here? Why don't we go out and talk to people?"

"People like whom?" asked the judge.

"TV commentators, people like that," said Millie.

"Naw," said Tony, "what do *they* know?"

"Let's go to Washington and see how the government works," suggested Laura. Then, looking at the long faces that surrounded her, she added, "Okay, it was a dumb idea, I take it back. We wouldn't know where to begin."

There was a long silence. Then Suki shook her head, almost as if to rouse herself. "I wonder — I wonder if maybe the best thing we could do is forget about being amateur reporters trying to cover everything that's happening in the world." She searched for the right way to put it. "Instead of talking superficially to strangers, couldn't we talk seriously to people we know?"

"I'll ask the same question I asked before," said Bart. "People like whom?"

Suki leaned forward, her hands gripping the front of her desk. "Like our families. Like Tony's parents, and Harry's parents, and Lisa's mother, and Fran's mother, and my father—"

"That's a great idea, Suki," Tony exclaimed. "Hey, we could visit a family a week, for the rest of the year."

"No, we couldn't," said Harry. "There's too many of us, and not enough weeks."

"Besides," laughed Maria, "I can see the whole crowd here squeezing into our little apartment."

Ms. Williams looked dubious. "It just might be a disaster," she reflected aloud. "And then too, it just might work. If we do try it, I have a suggestion."

"What's that?" came the response in chorus.

"Break up into groups. That way you can handle several family visits the same week. And each group can report back to the whole class during the remaining class sessions."

The proposal was adopted, and the class agreed to draw lots, so as to divide into three groups. But for lack of time, the actual drawing was postponed for a week, during which time some thought was given to ways of starting the visits.

"Whose home is going to be first?" asked Tony. "Any volunteers?"

"Well," said Suki, "since I started this, I should offer to invite a group to our place this Friday night. I think my father would really enjoy it. Unfortunately—"

"Unfortunately?" Tony was sure Suki intended to back out.

"My father's away on a business trip. He'll be away for almost a month. But my grandfather and grandmother are there. I'd have to ask them if it would be okay, but would it be okay with you guys?"

"That'll be great," exclaimed Anne. "We can talk about their farm!"

"Oh, wow," Laura whispered to Mickey, "I can just see myself asking about what's new in the henhouse." Her green eyes twinkled.

"I don't know," grinned Mickey. "I'll bet there's a lot that goes on behind the barn that you'd find very interesting."

Laura looked at him with mock severity. "Mickey, now I know what your mind reminds me of — a compost heap!"

Mickey smiled complacently. "I ripen slowly," he remarked. "I'm afraid to develop too quickly — it might startle people."

iv

Even though he was wearing a heavy pullover, Mark shivered a bit in the chill air of the autumn evening. He was wandering down Hurley Street, swinging a short branch he had picked up as if it were a baseball bat. He thunked it several times against a maple tree, then ran it across the iron bars of a churchyard fence. There was a grim sort of satisfaction to be had from the racket he made, and he proceeded to whack away at a hickory tree that stood near the bank. Had he not been so engrossed in trying to break the stick he was swinging, he might have seen someone he knew emerge from the newspaper store across the street. As it was, they saw each other at the same moment, and there was no getting away from the meeting, for either of them.

He and Lisa looked at each other soberly, equally embarrassed and equally tongue-tied. Finally Lisa threw back her head a bit and said, "I think you ought to know: the thing with Greg — it's over. I never want to see him again."

Mark scowled. "So? That's between you and him. What's it got to do with me? If you still liked him, you'd still be going with him."

Momentarily Lisa looked taken aback. Then she shrugged. "Maybe you're right. But at least give me credit for knowing when something's over. That's what I wasn't smart enough to realize before. I should have broken off with you *before* I started fooling around with Greg, but I didn't. Instead I hurt you in a way you didn't deserve to be hurt, and I can't tell you how sorry I am."

"You mean there were ways I deserved to be hurt?"

Lisa reddened. "I should have just told you how it was when I thought it was over and we should break up. You'd have been hurt, but you wouldn't have felt deceived."

Mark continued to look at her morosely. "Okay, now tell me why you wanted to break up."

"There was something missing," Lisa said slowly, her eyes downcast, "but I don't know what it was."

"We were friends. More than friends."

"Were we?" She hesitated. "We hung out together a lot, that's true. But that just made us — what? — companions, I guess."

"Pals," Mark said sarcastically. "But what was it that was missing?"

"Mark, please," she replied. Unthinkingly she had started to put her hand on his arm, but she arrested her movement when she realized how it might be misunderstood. "I can't put it into words. When I'm able to, believe me, I'll try to explain it to you. But my mother will be imagining all sorts of things if I don't get home pretty soon."

She started off, but he called out after her, "Will you be going to Jill's birthday party?"

"Of course. Won't you?"

Mark nodded, and gave the hickory tree a tremendous whack. He had the satisfaction of noting that the heavy stick he'd been swinging like a bat had at last broken in half.

* * *

In class the next day, Lisa asked, "Miss Williams, are there any social relationships that are basic?"

Ms. Williams looked somewhat startled. "Basic? I'm not sure. How about parent-child relationships?"

Lisa wrinkled her nose, then rubbed it vigorously with the back of her hand. "Well, yes — but what about — what about friendship?"

"Well, that's one sort of social relationship, but I'm not sure it's basic."

Lisa seemed undismayed. "And how about business relationships? They're also what you'd call social, aren't they?"

"Of course," the teacher responded. "Why?"

"Oh, I was just thinking. In business, people buy and sell, right? By engaging in buying you become a buyer and by engaging in selling you become a seller."

"Right. It's a transaction, and until the transaction takes place, you're neither a buyer nor a seller."

"Hey, wait," exclaimed Jill. "You don't have to engage in a transaction in order to acquire a new relationship. Look, my sister lives a thousand miles from here, and yet, the moment she has a baby, I'll become an aunt, even though I didn't do a thing!"

"And think of all the people who are my ancestors, and I'm their descendent," laughed Millie. "And what did *I* do?"

"That's right, Millie," said Mickey. "Thousands and thousands of generations, all leading up to you. That's what's called 'progress'."

Ms. Williams rapped timidly on the desk with her knuckles, and said, "Lisa, I'm sorry, we seem to have gotten away from you. What was it you started to ask about?"

"Well, look, in a business transaction, each person considers very carefully the consequences of what each person does. Like, someone will say, if you'll pay me fifty dollars, I'll sell you this bicycle. See what I mean — if you do this for me, then I'll do this for you. It's an "if-then" arrangement."

Ms. Williams frowned. "If you bargain with someone, or make a contract with someone, yes, it's a conditional arrangement, and you can use an 'if-then' statement to express something that's conditional. But I still don't see what you're driving at, Lisa."

"I think what I'm trying to say is that, in friendship, you don't set conditions. So that means there are no 'if-thens' in friendship."

"Aw, Lisa, please," Tony begged. "You're confusing everything. You're confusing reasoning relationships with social relationships. Boy, how messed-up can you get?"

Lisa ignored Tony's plea and continued, "What I mean is, you don't say to your friend, if you do this for me, I'll do this for you. You just do what you want to for your friend without conditions, and without expecting any return whatsoever. That's why I say that, in friendships, 'if-then' doesn't apply."

"Not just in friendships," Jill cried out, coming to Lisa's support. "It's in families too. I don't think my mother or father would ever say to one another — or to me — I'll do this for you but only if you'll do this for me."

"Why do you think that is," Ms. Williams asked.

"I guess," said Jill, "in friendships and in families there's trust. It's as simple as that. If people don't trust each other, then you've no longer got a friendship or a family."

"But those are extreme cases," said Randy. "Society isn't made up of just families and friendships. It's made up of governments and businesses and labor unions and churches and all sorts of things!"

"Sure!" Lisa replied. "But there you're talking about cases where people get together because there are advantages for them to do so, and where they calculate those advantages and exchange them with other people—"

Ms. Williams interrupted. "What would you call such arrangements?"

"I'd call them 'associations'," Lisa replied. "I'd say, if it's built on exchanges, or if everyone's in it together for some advantage — like workers in a labor union or stockholders in a corporation, right? — then it's an association."

"But what would you call the others?" Bill asked.

"They're communities," said Suki.

"Even if there are only two members, like in a friendship?" asked Luther.

"Aw," Maria scoffed, "I can't go along with this. Like, I'll say to Mark, if you vacuum, I'll dust. Now, we're certainly members of the same family — I don't know what can be closer than twins. And yet, we're making an if-then exchange. So see, Lisa, it doesn't hold up."

Lisa said nothing, but Fran remarked, "On the contrary, it merely means that, to the extent you bargain with Mark about what you'll do for him if he'll do something in return for you, then to that extent your family is an association rather than a community."

Mark stared at Lisa. Her face was flushed. She had many thoughts, but chose not to utter any of them. And Mark could think of nothing to say.

"Getting back to what Lisa was saying," Harry remarked, "does it mean that we become who we are by engaging in various social relationships? I mean, look, in relationship to my parents, I'm a son. In relationship to the teachers here, I'm a student. See what I mean? It's like there's a web of relationships that I'm at the center of."

"Okay, everyone," said Mickey, "let's hear it for Spider Stottlemeier!"

Ignoring Mickey's banter, Lisa said, "It seems to me you're at the center of many webs, Harry. Some of them are communities and some are associations."

"Excuse me," Sandy put in. "I still don't see the difference between the two. People are always seeking their own advantage, even in communities. Even in families and among friends. The reason I have friends is because it's to my advantage to have them; that's all there is to it."

Suki shook her head vigorously. "That's just the point you're missing, Sandy. In a community — like for example in a friendship, or in a family, or in a classroom where everyone cooperates and inquires together — the other person's welfare means as much to you as your own does. In an association, on the other hand, your own welfare generally comes first. In an association, you cooperate with others because it's to your advantage to do so. In a community, the question of whose advantage it is never even comes up because you always take other people's points of view into account. In a community, you understand and accept other people, and they understand and accept you: it's as simple as that."

"In that case," Mickey said flatly, "there are no communities. This is just a myth all of you are making up."

Suki shrugged. There was a silence, then Lisa remarked, "If I ever get married, it will have to be a community. And if it's not, I'm not sure I'd consider it a real marriage. In the same way—" she paused, trying not to look at Mark, "I think two people can be companions — even constant companions, congenial companions — but it may still not be a real friendship."

"But y'know," said Fran, "friends and family are very different. You choose one, but you don't choose the other. So some communities are voluntary and some are involuntary."

"That's right," Mickey agreed. "My friends are free to accept me and I'm free to accept them."

"What friends?" Sandy teased. "You mean your companions, don't you?"

* * *

Jill had told her mother that she wanted an old-fashioned kind of birthday party. Not the kind where the whole building vibrates all night long to a disco beat, but the kind where everyone sits around a big table with a birthday cake. Mrs. Portos was skeptical, and it turned out she was right. Jill's classmates tired very quickly of sitting around the table, and before long the disco beat was shaking the building.

It was very warm in the living-room, and Lisa discovered a tiny porch, where there was a chair and a small, rickety glider. She sat down in the glider and gazed moodily out into the night. Then Mark came out and sat down on the chair facing her.

"Is that what you meant, today in class?" he demanded, "that we never were friends in the first place because I was always thinking of what I could get out of it? 'Cause it's not true, y'know!"

"Mark," Lisa said softly, "I didn't mean for you to take it personally. I was just trying to think out loud." But to herself she wondered if Mark were right, and that her comments in class had been aimed at him.

He stared glumly at the buildings across the street. Then he remarked, "Y'know what Harry was saying, that we're like a knot at the center of all the social connections we have? Well, I've been thinking about that. D'you know what it's like to lose all the social relationships that mean anything to you? It's like there's suddenly nothing left to you. I mean, look, I can't play on the team; people think I'm a criminal, or a nut; my family's pulling out and moving halfway across the country; and the one person I've been anyway close to goes around telling people how we were just companions. When all your social relationships just shrivel up like that — y'know what I mean? — you begin to wonder if you really exist."

Lisa leaned forward and took his hands. "Mark, I don't want you to misunderstand me. I feel sure that, for us, there's no going back. But that doesn't mean that the other things won't work out. You wait and see — you'll be cleared, and you'll be back on the team. Maybe you won't even have to move. Believe me, Mark. I've been through times just as bad, when my father died, and my mother and I quarreled all the time, and I wanted to run away. But it worked out. I survived. And so will you." She rose to go back to the living room, but in the doorway she paused and looked back. "I know it sounds corny, but we *can* be friends."

Mark desperately struggled to find something to say, but he remained speechless, and Lisa finally turned and rejoined her classmates in the living-room.

iv

The yellow, sodium-vapor street lights were just beginning to go on when Sandy, with Laura on the front bar of his bike, came to a screeching stop in front of the apartment house where Laura lived.

"Oh, I'm so late," Laura said nervously. "Sandy, it was nice of you to give me a ride. But I'd feel better if you'd go back right away."

Sandy tried to look nonchalant, but he had to admit to himself that he was nervous too. "I'll be all right," he said. But he knew that where Laura lived was the Raiders' territory, and they wouldn't be very happy about finding him there.

"My key's for the back door, around through the alley," said Laura. "But I'll be okay. You go on."

Sandy, however, decided to do the gallant thing. Wheeling his bike alongside him, he accompanied Laura into the dark alleyway and didn't turn to leave until she was safely indoors.

Suddenly someone grabbed him by the wrist and twisted his arm behind him. He lost his hold on the bike and it fell with a crash to the ground. Sandy struggled to free himself, but his attacker merely twisted his arm further behind him. Sandy's shouts for help went unheeded; it was a neighborhood where shouts were nothing new and were usually drowned out by the blaring of radio and television broadcasts from the apartments, and by the horns and sirens of the street.

For a moment, Sandy was able to catch sight of another person — a lookout — silhouetted against the street. Then he found himself propelled towards some steps leading down to the basement. He was shoved hard, so hard that he stumbled crazily down the wet, slippery steps, and then sprawled on the concrete floor.

The two young persons stood for a moment at the top of the stairs, regarding Sandy with a certain amount of satisfaction. Then the lookout remarked, "Get the bike and let's get out of here." It was the first time Sandy realized that the speaker — who was wearing a long-visored cap and a denim jacket — was a girl. She grabbed her companion's arm. "No, wait. There's a patrol car right across the street."

"Might as well wait comfortably," commented her friend. The two of them sat down on the top step. Sandy was sitting up now, rubbing his aching shoulder.

"I've seen better bikes, Link," said the girl, whom Sandy soon learned was named Casey.

"S'okay," Link replied. "We can get a few bucks for it."

Sandy looked up at them and scowled. "You guys," he said ruefully. "That's *my bike*." To himself, Sandy thought, "They're so darn sure I'll stick to the code and not turn them in."

"It *was* your bike,' replied Casey calmly adjusting her cap to an even more jaunty angle. She was small and slim. But Link wasn't much bigger. Sandy knew he could escape down the basement hall. But he didn't want to leave his bicycle.

"I *bought* it!" Sandy protested.

Link smiled faintly. "Tough," he said. "Besides, it's our turf."

Casey looked out toward the street again, sighed in a relaxed sort of way, and settled down alongside her companion. "Just because you have money and we don't," she remarked, "no reason you should be able to ride around on a bike and we shouldn't."

Sandy was indignant. "I *worked* for that money!"

"We worked for your bike," responded Link.

"Stealing's not work!" Sandy argued.

"Ah," Casey said impishly. "Don't say 'steal'. We never steal; we just *liberate* stuff. In fact, we're just like Robin Hood — we take from the rich and give to the poor."

"Namely us," Link added, with a laugh.

Sandy tried a different approach. "Naturally you don't intend getting caught," he said.

"We don't plan to," they replied together.

Sandy insisted glumly, "It's still a crime." He was beginning to wonder what other arguments he could bring up.

"Crime," said Link. His voice was calm, matter-of-fact. Then he added, with a note of irony that wasn't lost on Sandy, "What's a crime?"

"C'mon," Sandy retorted impatiently. "You know what I mean. Breaking the law."

"Crimes are wrong?" Casey asked, with pretended innocence. "Why?"

"They're against the law!"

"Is there a law against breaking the law?"

Sandy was aware that he was being teased, and he was indignant. "That's ridiculous! Of course not!"

"So then it's okay," Casey concluded.

Sandy was furious. "The law's the law!" was all he could think of saying.

"Laws are made to be broken," she replied.

Link shook his head at Casey. "Naw, he's never going to see that." Then he added, turning to Sandy, "Look, as long as there are laws, there'll be crimes. You want to get rid of crimes, get rid of laws. That's the only way it can be done."

Sandy reflected on this, but offered no reply. Casey got up, peeked down the alleyway, then returned to her seat with a long sigh. Link spotted something atop the trashcan that was next to where he was seated. It was a discarded bunch of flowers. Even in the half-dark it was evident that they were wilted and crushed, but he took one of them and fitted it into the shoulder-strap of Casey's jacket. She smiled at him and nodded thanks.

Unimpressed by the show of affection, Sandy grumbled, "It's still my bike! Just because crimes happen all the time, that doesn't make them right."

"Right?" Link laughed. "Who said anything about right? It's something you can't avoid, like getting sick and dying. It ain't nice, but it's normal."

Sandy's brow furrowed. "Crime is normal?"

"Sure," Link continued. "Just like pain. Pain's normal, ain't it? Pull your belt too tight, it hurts, right? And the looser you make it, the less pain you're in." Then he added, with a grin, " 'course, you could try goin' without a belt altogether..."

Sandy shifted uneasily on the floor. He wasn't sure what Link was driving at. "So when laws are made, it's like asking for trouble? That doesn't make sense."

Casey smiled tolerantly at Sandy. "Suppose you're in a place where everyone's uptight. They'll throw you in jail for practically nothing — for dressing different, maybe, or for just looking a little crooked at a cop. But in a place where everybody's just the opposite, where things are real loose, like in a frontier town, y'know, you can get away with murder."

"Hey," said Sandy, trying to keep his voice steady, "if you left the bike here, you could just walk out the alley and the cops in that car wouldn't bother you one bit."

"Why should they bother us?" Link asked. "It's our bike."

"I've got a bill of sale for it!" Sandy protested.

There was a peal of laughter from Casey. "He's got a bill of sale for it," she said, mimicking Sandy's intonation.

Sandy was determined not to lose his temper. He clenched his teeth to keep from saying something he would be sure to regret. Then he said slowly, "You make fun of laws. But it's laws that hold the country together."

"There's where you're wrong?" Link exclaimed. "It's not laws that hold the country together, but *lawbreakers*! If we didn't exist, society would have to invent us!"

Sandy was astounded. All he could say was, "That's crazy."

"Okay," replied Link, quite unruffled. "But here you are, snarling and growling about your bike, like a dog trying to protect a bone. And if your friends and family were here, they'd bark at us too. And if you told the cops, they'd do more than bark — they'd bite. So what holds all of you together? *We* do! Without us guys, you guys would all go to pieces!"

"Society *has to* organize against crime—" Sandy started to say.

But Casey broke in with, "—and crime has to organize against society."

"You mean," Sandy asked, "it's just like a *war* between society and the criminal? Like, it's just a matter of who has more force?"

"Ah, now, you're beginning to get it," Link said with a short laugh.

"But what about the courts?" Sandy objected. "The courts don't take sides. They're objective."

"The job of the courts," said Casey, "is to administer the law. So isn't it obvious whose side they're on? They're *never* on the law-breaker's side — how *can* they be?"

Sandy wasn't satisfied. "There's another way!" he protested. "There's a right and there's a wrong. And those who're right gotta protect themselves against those who're wrong, that's all there is to it."

"Sure, sure," said Link. "So we'll go on snarling at them and they'll go on snarling at us. Some society!"

"Yeah, gee, wow," echoed Casey, "some society!"

"But what—" Sandy spluttered, "what's the alternative?"

"If things were more just to start with—" Link began.

"Just?"

"Y'know, fair," said Casey.

"So?"

"There'd be a lot less need for people to square off all the time and take sides," Casey said, throwing her head back defiantly.

"You guys don't convince me one bit," Sandy retorted. "Look, when a guy gets caught stealing a base in baseball, and if the ump doesn't call him out, you'll hear *everyone* squawk, all the way back to the bleachers. Everybody gets into the act, because if the umps don't enforce the rules, then it's like they're trying to break up the game. The rules *have* to be enforced, even when they don't matter much."

"So when we take your bike," Casey asked, "you think it's like we're trying to break up the game?"

"That's right!"

"But why do we do it? — because we don't want to see everybody else play?"

"No—" Sandy looked squarely at Casey, who was standing with her hands on her hips in the doorway. "It's because you want in — and you don't know any other way. I see that."

A light drizzle was beginning to come down. Link rose to his feet and put his arm around Casey's waist. "C'mon," he said, "they'll sit out there on that corner all night."

"Yeah," she said, nodding, "let's split."

A minute later, Sandy slowly ascended the steps and repossessed his bike.

CHAPTER FOUR

The next morning, Sandy told the class how his bicycle had been taken from him.

"I'd have jumped the guy," Randy said indignantly. "So help me, I'd have clobbered him."

"I thought of that, too," Sandy said quietly. "But first of all, I figured they weren't so stupid as to try something like that without having some kind of a weapon on them, even if it was just a pipe or something. And secondly, I asked myself, is my bike worth it?"

"But people can't be allowed to go around doing as they please!" Randy insisted. "There has to be a government! There've *got* to be laws!"

Bart tried to restrain himself, but was unable to. He gestured several time with his right hand, with a short, quick chopping motion, and finally demanded, "So are you saying that the business of government is to keep people from fighting with one another?"

"Sure!" Randy retorted. "What else could it be?"

"The government has two jobs," said Tim. "Keeping peace at home and fighting with other countries. Those are the only two things it has to do."

"The police and the military," said Mickey.

Now it was Mark who burst in. "Aw, you guys are all wet! Those aren't the *only* two things the government's got to do — to keep people from fighting and to defend us from attackers."

Randy stared at Mark coldly. "Okay, so prove we're wrong."

Mark stared back. But he could say nothing. He looked away from Randy, to see if the others in the class might be able to help him.

Finally Lisa said slowly, but not looking at Mark, "I know a way to prove a statement false. But I don't know how it would apply to this case."

"Tell us anyhow, Lisa," said Ms. Williams gently. "It can't hurt."

"Well," Lisa continued, trying to find the right words, "if someone tells me to believe that Harding was a greater president than Washington, all I have to say is, 'Not if I already believe it to be true that Washington was a greater president than Harding. Because if one of those statements is true, the other one *has* to be false."

"Hey!" said Bart, to no one in particular, "she's right! She's absolutely right!"

"Okay, Lisa," said Tony. "But like you yourself said, how does this apply?"

"Let me take a crack at it," said Harry. "Look, Randy's saying that 'the government's only job is to keep the peace' is a true statement. And Mark's saying it's false. Now, Lisa's arguing that whether it's true or false depends on what we're assuming. If it's the opposite of whatever we're assuming, and if our assumptions are true, then it's false."

"But what *are* we assuming?" Millie asked. "My head's spinning."

"I've got it!" exclaimed Mark. "Let me first show you what Randy's assuming. He's assuming two things: first, that people always want to fight one another, and second, that only the force of government can stop them. Given those two assumptions, it *does* follow that the only job of the government is to keep the peace."

"No," said Tony, "there's a third assumption you're leaving out: that peace is the only thing that's important. But *if* you assume those *three* things, then it would seem to follow that Randy's right."

"That's my point!" Mark practically shouted. "That's my point! What I claim is, if you were to start from three *opposite* assumptions, then Randy's statement would be definitely false."

"But what would be *your* assumptions, Mark?" Suki asked.

"I'd say, first of all, that people don't *naturally* want to fight one another: people *learn* to go around with a chip on their shoulders. Secondly, I'd say that if we want people not to fight all the time with one another, then force isn't the answer. People have got to be brought up differently. It's something you can't solve by force — it's only going to be solved by the way you bring kids up."

"But what about Tony's third assumption?" Maria asked.

"Let me answer that," Tony said. "I'd say peace is *not* the most important thing. Because if you had a society where there was law and order, it still might not be a place where people were fair to one another, and felt free. But if you had a society where everyone was fair and everyone felt free, then it would naturally follow that people in that society would be peaceful."

"So what it all boils down to," said Mickey coolly, "is whether we take your assumptions or ours."

"That's right," said Tony. "Because I think these are rock bottom assumptions. I don't think there are any more basic ones underlying these. So if we're going to have a social studies course that makes some sense, these are the things we should be talking about."

After class, Tony and Millie stood looking out the window, their backs to their classmates. Millie's arm was around Tony's waist, and Tony's arm was draped casually over Millie's shoulders. Lisa came up and stood behind them quietly until Tony turned around, and looked at her quizzically.

"Tony," said Lisa, "I'd like to thank you for helping the way you did."

Tony just said, "Aw." Then he added, "Mark and Harry helped, too."

"Well, with them it's different," Lisa said. "I don't have to thank Harry. And I guess as far as Mark's concerned, I'm thanking you for him as much as for myself."

Since Lisa and Tony had never gotten along very well, and tended to be rather caustic with one another, such a display of gratitude on Lisa's part seemed most unusual to Tony. He even thought she might be making fun of him, but she was serious and unsmiling.

"Oh, yes, one other thing," Lisa continued. "What I said about Harding and Washington — if one statement was true, then it was *certain* that the other statement was false, right?"

Tony nodded, so did Millie.

"But when we were talking about whether Randy's statement was true or not, you said it depended on what assumptions it followed from."

"I said that Randy's conclusion followed naturally from his assumptions, but it wouldn't follow from Mark's assumptions."

"Okay," said Lisa, "so what I want to know from you is, what do you mean by 'follows naturally'? You mean it's not as clear-cut as the sentences I was talking about, isn't that so?"

"Oh, I see what you're driving at," Tony said with a short laugh. "Sure, when I said 'follows naturally,' I didn't mean anything as strict as what you were talking about. All I meant was that, given Randy's assumptions, his conclusion was believable, and given Mark's assumptions, *his* conclusion was believable."

"Being believable and being certain aren't the same," added Millie.

Lisa looked up at Tony. "I think it's very important that we figure out how to show that Mark's assumptions are correct," she said. "I can't tell you how important it is."

Millie put her arm around Lisa and drew her aside. "We will," she said simply. "We will, you'll see." Then she glanced at Tony and added, "If only people loved one another, it would all be so simple."

Lisa contemplated Millie's radiant face for a moment, then said soberly, "Where there are just two people it sure makes things a lot easier. But the more people you get involved, the more complicated things get, and you have to have laws, and policies, and all sorts of stuff like that. I guess where society's concerned, love's not enough."

"Is any one thing ever enough?" Tony asked.

Mark and Fran were deep in conversation on the sidewalk as Ms. Williams, struggling with an armful of books and papers, came out the front door of the school and started towards her car. A wisp of hair kept falling down over her eyes, and she finally had to put the books down on the hood of the car in order to brush her hair back. Fran noted that the teacher looked very tired. "They don't give you much time to rest between classes, do they?" Fran asked.

"Oh, I'm getting used to it," Ms. Williams replied, fumbling for her keys. "I really can't complain."

"These evening sessions," Fran remarked, "it's you they're going to be hardest on."

"Well, if we can keep it down to one or two a week, it won't be too bad. I'm afraid it's going to mean more homework assignments for the class than I'd planned on giving."

Mark shrugged, but before he could say anything, Mr. Swing appeared. Ms. Williams had made no progress toward locating her keys, and the principal inquired solicitously: "Is there anything I can do?"

At that moment, Ms. Williams held the keys aloft triumphantly. Then she said, as if anxious to talk about school problems rather than personal ones, "We were just talking about the home visits the class is going to make. I was explaining that there would have to be some extra homework to make up for class time that we would miss."

"That's good," said Mr. Swing. "As a matter of fact, I've been planning to mention them in my next column in the school newspaper."

"From the Principal's Desk," said Fran, poker-faced.

"While I have the three of you here," Mr. Swing went on, "this might be a good opportunity to ask you how you see these visits. What would you say their purpose is?"

Mark had been scuffling his feet and looking at the ground, but now he straightened up. "The way I see it, there isn't much point in reading a bunch of facts in a book unless we can evaluate them somehow. But, it's like we were saying in class the other day: in order to evaluate them we need criteria."

"It's the same with the field trips," said Fran. "We can go visit a battlefield or a stock exchange or an atomic energy plant, but how do we judge what we see?"

"Okay," said Mr. Swing, "but how would these home visits help?"

Mark looked at the principal directly for the first time during the conversation. "It seems to me, in order to judge how well a person's doing, you first have to know what he's *trying* to do. So why wouldn't it be the same thing with society? How can we tell what we're to think about the things society's doing unless we first know what it's trying to accomplish?"

"But Mark," said Mr. Swing, "What makes you think that you can't find out about society's goals right in the classroom? Doesn't the textbook talk about these things?"

"I'd like to answer that," said Fran. "If the textbooks do talk about society's goals, it's like they're things that are taken for granted. Like the way people recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and say the words 'liberty and justice for all,' but have no idea what those words mean."

"Well, why couldn't you discuss these ideals among yourselves in the classroom?" Mr. Swing wanted to know. "And with Ms. Williams guiding the discussions, wouldn't that be sufficient?"

"Mr. Swing," said Fran, "None of us in the classroom know enough of the world. We need to talk to people who've had a lot more experience than we've had. I think that, in the classroom, words like 'liberty' and 'justice' sound very empty. But I know my parents take them seriously, and I'll bet Mark's parents do too. In fact, I'll bet the best people to talk to about what's important are the ones who try to live by these things, and that may not be the people who write books about them."

"I don't think it's helpful to contrast books and people like that," Mr. Swing said softly. "They can both be valuable sources of information."

"But that's the point — it's not just information we need!" exclaimed Fran. "In order to think for ourselves, we need to know what other people think."

It was Ms. Williams' turn to look squarely at Mr. Swing. "I think they're right," she said. "Unless young people understand the ideals which a society is trying to achieve, how can they tell whether the institutions in that society are working well or badly?"

"Wouldn't it be worthwhile to find out how the institutions work, without rushing to evaluate them?" Mr. Swing countered.

"No way!" Mark said emphatically. "No way! We want to understand how people do things in this society — or in fact, in any society. But we don't just want to be *told* what goes on; we want to be able to *think* about what goes on. So we want to know the reasons society has for the things it does and the ways it does them!"

Ms. Williams looked at Mr. Swing, and smiled faintly. "I should imagine you have material enough for that column now," she remarked.

He regarded her gravely. "I try to be — as they say — with it," he replied.

iii

Before the lots were drawn to decide who would be in each of the three groups, Mark had some anxious moments thinking about the possible line-ups. His primary concern was that he would find himself in the same group with Bart (whom Maria sometimes referred to as "Supersleuth"). But, Mark figured, if he and Bart *had* to be in the same group, then it would be nice to have with him those of his classmates whom he knew would stand up to the judge, if need be. He was thinking in particular of Fran and Tony and Harry.

But it didn't work out quite that way. Bart announced before the lots were drawn that he felt entitled to attend any meeting he wished, and although many members of the class felt that was inconsistent with Bart's previous proclamation that he wished to be treated the same as everyone else, no one dared challenge him. Then the lots were drawn, with these results:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Harry	Jill	Luther
Suki	Tim	Bill
Mickey	Tony	Fran
Sandy	Mark	Laura
Anne	Millie	Lisa
Jane	Maria	Randy

It was then agreed that members of the class would discuss with their families the possibility of inviting a group for an evening discussion. Ms. Williams, like Bart, promised to be present at each group meeting. A calendar was posted on the bulletin board, and it was agreed that, as dates were scheduled, they would be entered on the calendar. It was also agreed that, after each evening meeting, the group would report back to the entire class the next day with a summary of what happened, so that the other members of the class could consider the thinking that had been done the previous evening.

In the social studies class the following day, Mickey continued to expound his view that society can be held together only by laws that punish wrongdoers by making them suffer. Suki and Anne kept arguing that Mickey was wrong, but they found it difficult to develop an alternative position.

After a time, Anne said, "Why do we have to think of laws as rules anyhow? Why can't we think of them as something else — like, say, prescriptions? A doctor doesn't tell you how to live if you're already healthy, but if you get sick, he gives you a prescription. And if the medicine works, your health is restored."

"That's right," Suki said. "Why can't we see the purpose of laws as being to remedy or to cure? Why does it always have to be, to punish?"

"Hey, Anne," Jane called out. "What's this about 'a doctor, *he*'?"

"Yeah, Anne," Fran added, "any reason we can't be doctors, too?"

The discussion got sidetracked at this point, with Randy claiming that men made better doctors than women. It seemed that the original topics under discussion — what holds society together and what is the purpose of law — had been abandoned. But these topics came up again in the evening discussions that followed.

The first to agree to invite a group for an evening of conversation was the Warfield family, Suki's grandparents having scheduled themselves for a later date. As the group assembled in the Warfields' living room, Luther's mother bustled back and forth to the kitchen. Also present were Marty, Luther's older brother, and Wilda, Marty's current girlfriend.

"I hear you're a judge," Marty said to Bart.

"Used to be, but no longer. I'm retired."

Marty squinted at Bart, then remarked, "I don't guess it's easy, being a judge."

"In the Children's Court? You can say that again!"

"Yeah, it must be rough," Marty acknowledged. "You've got the law on one side of you and all those messed-up parents and kids on the other."

Bill lifted his head and looked sharply at Luther, but said nothing. Bart merely replied, "If you're any good as a judge, you've got respect for both sides."

Wilda leaned forward and looked at Bart steadily. "But isn't the way you see it," she asked, "that the law represents society? So when it's a case of society against the individual, aren't you always on society's side?"

Luther laughed, although no one else did, and he remarked to Wilda, "Hey, c'mon now, don't put Bart on the spot like that. He's not looking for an argument."

"It was a perfectly fair question," Wilda responded.

"Look, Wilda," said Bart, "if I knew the answer to that question, I wouldn't be here now. I'd be sitting out on a beach chair somewhere, enjoying my retirement. But I'm really puzzled. Thirty years ago, when I first began to sit on the bench, I knew all the answers. Now I'm beginning to wonder if I even know the questions."

"But Wilda's right," Bill observed. "The law always takes society's side. It has to. Even when the verdict favors the individual, that's the way it goes because it happens to be good for society."

"The way I see it," Randy observed, "laws are made by society to stop crimes from being committed."

Fran's back had been to Randy — she'd been studying one of Luther's paintings that Mrs. Warfield had hung in the living room. But now she swung around and scowled at Randy. "So what's the reason people commit crimes?" she asked.

"People commit crimes because they have criminal tendencies," Randy shot back. "We all have them. But some people have them more than other people do."

Fran was irritated by Randy's comment, but a new thought preoccupied her, and when she spoke there was more wondering in her voice than annoyance: "I can't figure out the real reasons that crimes are condemned. Is it that we don't like people to commit crimes — or is it that we call crimes whatever people do that we don't like?"

Randy shook his head. "You're not getting through to me."

But Fran would say no more. She turned her attention back to Luther's painting. Laura, however, had been following the discussion very intently, and now she interceded: "I think I get what Fran means, Randy. Let me try saying it. Now, let's say there are laws that forbid us to do certain things. Were the laws passed because doing those things was wrong, or do we think those things are wrong just because they're forbidden by law?"

Mrs. Warfield lifted the apron on her lap, put it back, smoothed it, and said quietly but firmly, "It's not an either-or. Sometimes it's one way, and sometimes it's the other. There are laws against murder because murder's just plain wrong. But I've got to admit that lots of times, things that are perfectly harmless are also forbidden."

"So," Laura said, "is that the answer? That some things are forbidden because they're considered wrong, and some things are considered wrong because they're forbidden?"

"Sure, Laura," said Luther. "What I think Mom's saying is that not everything that's wrong has a law against it, and not everything that has a law against it is wrong."

"By the same token," said Lisa, "not everything that's right is praised, and not everything that's praised is right."

"Are you saying," Bart asked, "that maybe the laws aren't perfect?"

"I imagine they have a way to go," Fran remarked over her shoulder.

"Way to go!" Wilda echoed. Then she added, "A longer way than most people think!"

iv

Suki had prepared her grandparents well. They saw to it that Kio went off to bed early, and they weren't displeased at finding themselves the center of attention. Anne plied them with questions about the farm, and Suki's grandparents responded briefly but good-naturedly to each inquiry.

"Who's running the farm while you're away?" Anne asked.

Suki's grandfather pursed his lips. "Two hired men. I dare say they're running it, but I can't say as they're running it well."

"There are sure a lot of chores on a farm," Mickey remarked.

"Ai-uh," the farmer replied. "And you can't neglect any of them."

"My uncle works in an auto assembly plant," said Sandy, "and he does the same thing all day long. He works on an assembly line. Every now and then, just to make things interesting, he'll walk up the line, assembling the switches he works on real fast. And then he walks back to his regular place, just taking his time."

"It can't be very interesting," Suki's grandmother commented quietly.

"That's not the point," said Mickey. "It makes mass production possible."

"That's right," Bart put in. "There's only one way of producing big quantities of products efficiently — by making sure that each person's a specialist, and then getting them all to work together. It's the 'division of labor'."

"Division of labor, my foot!" growled Suki's grandfather. "On the farm, each person's got to be able to do everything from fixing tractors to candling eggs, from plowing to harvesting. But when all a person can do is one thing, and that's all, just that one thing — well, I say he's just a cog in a machine."

"Doctors can do everything — everything in medicine, anyhow," said Jane.

Sandy shook his head. "*They're* getting more and more specialized, too."

"The more specialized people get," Suki's grandmother observed, "the more they need big corporations and governments to organize them and coordinate what they do. If people would be responsible for themselves — if they'd learn to be self-reliant — they wouldn't need government to look after them."

Bart said, "I'm afraid that day's gone forever," but Suki's grandfather merely responded with a "Hrumpf!"

"I'm confused," said Anne suddenly. "When everyone's self-reliant, what holds society together?"

"There are organizations," said Miss Williams, "like corporations and unions. And there are institutions — like schools, and churches, and the government itself."

"But how," Anne persisted, "do those organizations and institutions *make* people do what they want them to do?"

"They can make rules for their members," said Linda.

"And some of them can make laws," added Mickey.

"That's right!" Bart exclaimed. "There's the law!"

"Ah, the law!" Suki's grandmother remarked. "Now, talk about something that holds society together!"

Her husband turned to her. "What's *that* supposed to mean?" he asked gruffly.

She smiled at him, her eyes bright behind her glasses. "Think of all the families that are not held together by love, but only by law," she said.

"It's the law that enforces contracts," interjected Mickey. "That's what makes business possible."

"And it's the law that puts crooks behind bars," said Sandy. "That makes a better life possible for people who obey the law."

Bart mumbled something that sounded like "Amen."

"There are too many laws," Suki's grandfather observed, looking directly at Anne. "If people were brought up right and worked hard at doing all the different things a man can do in this world, they'd stay out of trouble and we wouldn't need all those laws to keep them honest."

"There's got to be laws," objected Mickey. "Because otherwise there'd be no reason to punish people who do wrong."

"But Mickey!" said Jane, "just the other day you were saying that the only time things are wrong is when they're against the law. Yet now you're saying that the only time laws are made is when it's necessary to prevent people from doing wrong. I don't understand."

"It's easy," Mickey smiled at Jane tolerantly. "I'm inconsistent. It makes life more interesting."

"There are laws," said Suki's grandmother, "and there are laws."

Her husband looked pained but said nothing. Harry, however, asked "Does that mean there are two kinds of laws?"

Suki's grandmother glanced at Harry intently. "Of course."

"And people who break both kinds have to be punished?"

"Oh," she smiled, "I didn't say that—"

"So," said Suki quickly, "there's one kind of law that requires punishment, and another kind that doesn't?"

"Each kind holds society together in its own way." Suki's grandmother could tell, from the frowns that confronted her, that her remark had left her guests in the dark. So she simply added, "there are laws that punish and laws that restore."

"But which are which?" Sandy wanted to know. "Look, suppose a kid swipes a bike from another kid. And let's say he gets arrested and sent to the Youth House for a few months, okay? So isn't it the same law that both punishes him and gives the bike back to its owner? Isn't the law that represses the criminal the same as the law that restores things to victims?"

But Jane shook her head. She could see that Bart wanted to say something, but she went ahead with her idea anyhow. "Don't you see, Sandy, there are two different kinds of laws, because they have different purposes?"

"Like what?"

"Well, the purpose of enforcing certain laws is to make the people who broke those laws feel bad."

"Feel bad?" Sandy inquired.

"To make them suffer. The idea is, they hurt society by breaking society's laws. So now they've got to be hurt in turn, to make things even."

"An eye for an eye."

"Right," Jane replied. "But it's not just getting even. The idea's that the only way they can atone for what they did is for them to suffer real bad."

"All laws are like that," snapped Suki's grandfather.

"No, they're not," his wife returned, gently but firmly. "There are other laws — laws that restore."

"Restore what?"

"Restore what was stolen to the rightful owner," Sandy answered.

Suki put her hand to her mouth for a moment and then took it away. "No, that's only part of it. I think my grandmother means — restoring things to the way they were."

Her grandfather's voice was harsh: "Things can't be restored to the way they were."

"I realize that," said his wife. "There's no going back. I realize that. But how about what happened on the way down here, remember? The accident at the intersection, right? And you and the other drivers talked so nicely to each other, and exchanged license numbers and all that, because you both knew the insurance companies wouldn't be worried about whose fault it was. But I can remember a time when each of you would have been threatening to put the other fellow in jail for having 'broken the law'."

Suki's grandfather smiled faintly. "You're right. Maybe both of us were to blame; maybe neither one was. But the important thing was to settle matters so each of us could get on with what we'd been doing before the accident. I guess like you say, the law in that case didn't aim to make us suffer, but just to restore things to the way they were."

"It's like when we're playing baseball," said Harry. "And someone breaks a rule, like a baserunner who steps off the basepath. Well, sure, he's called 'out,' but the idea isn't to punish him. The idea is just to get him off the field so that the game can continue without him for that inning."

"It's more civilized—" Anne began to say.

But Mickey quickly interrupted her. "Baloney!" he exclaimed. "There may be a few cases of laws like that, but society would fall apart if *all* its laws worked that way."

"Why?" Suki asked.

"Because governments are based on force, that's why. And since they have it, they've got to use it."

Again, Suki asked, "Why?"

"To retaliate against law-breakers, that's why."

This time it was Anne who asked, "Why?"

"Because," Mickey replied, in an exasperated tone, "only the government is allowed to use violence. The government has a monopoly on violence. We don't even have the right to defend ourselves when the police are around: they're supposed to do that for us. But that's how it has to be, and all this talk about 'laws that restore' really doesn't mean very much. Don't talk to me about what's civilized — civilization's based on force. Take away the force from behind the laws in a society, and you won't have a society. That's all there is to it."

For some moments, no one spoke. Then Suki's grandmother remarked, "Be that as it may, I'll never be convinced that the world is now the way it can and ought to be. Maybe what we're in now is only a later stage of barbarism, and I admit that some laws do deter criminals from committing crimes. But I can still look ahead and hope for better arrangements than those that we have at present. Speaking of better arrangements, who'd like some milk and cake?"

"All *right*!" exclaimed Mickey. But not surprisingly, it was Bart who led the way to the table with the refreshments.

V

"Lisa," said Fran, "you're going to have to tell us what you know."

Lisa looked at Fran pleadingly. "About what happened at the high school?" When Fran nodded, Lisa said, "I just can't."

"Why not? You can help clear whoever's innocent!"

"And squeal on whoever did it? No, not me. There must be some other way." Lisa snuffled. "Besides, everything I do is wrong. So I should just do nothing."

Fran said, "You're really having a guilt trip, aren't you?"

"Sure. Because whoever did it, I still feel responsible."

"The last time I talked to you, you thought Mark did it," Fran said pointedly. "You don't seem so sure of it now. Why not? What happened?"

Lisa was silent.

"You learned something about Greg?"

Lisa slumped into one of the chairs that stood in the hall just outside the library, and Fran sat down next to her.

"Lisa, tell me." Fran's voice was more gently this time. "What was it?"

"Nothing happened," Lisa said tonelessly. "It was just something I remembered. A book by someone named Stritz on American History." She sniffled, then rubbed her nose with her knuckles.

"So?" Fran asked, "Where did you see it?"

"I saw it just for a moment, on the top shelf of Greg's locker. I didn't think anything of it at the time, and he shut the locker real fast. But then yesterday I suddenly remembered where I'd seen that same book before. It was one that Mark had taken out of the library to do his research paper ."

Fran threw her arms around Lisa and hugged her. "That's it!" she exclaimed. "That's it! Greg must have been so jealous of Mark that he swiped the books and hid them in his locker, just to get Mark in trouble with the school!"

"I know," Lisa replied despondently. "I thought of all of that. And I'm afraid it's true. I never thought Greg would do such a thing to anyone. And because of me — oh, it's all so horrible!"

"That wraps it up," said Fran. "He must have figured everyone expected Mark to flip out. So when he saw Mark wandering around near the high school, he must have had an inspiration. Why not mess up a few classrooms and let everyone draw the conclusion it was Mark? Oh, Lisa, this is wonderful! Now Mark can be cleared!"

Lisa continued to look glum.

"Lisa, what's *with* you?" Fran demanded.

"The fact that Greg tried to get Mark in trouble about his library books doesn't prove it was Greg who did all that damage in the high school."

"It doesn't *prove* it," Fran replied, "but it's sure not going to help his case any." She stood up and reached out to Lisa as if to help her stand up. "C'mon, let's go tell Bart."

But Lisa remained seated and shook her head. "You don't understand— don't you see? Greg can *prove* it wasn't him."

Fran couldn't conceal her shock and dismay. "How?" she cried.

"He told me himself, when I asked him. He said, 'Lisa, don't you remember, we were standing behind the gymnasium, and I asked you what time it was. And you said it was 9:30, right?' Fran, I have to admit it. That's what time it was."

"So what?" Fran was bewildered.

"So what!" Lisa replied. "When the police examined the damage, they noticed that the electric clock in the hall had been smashed. And it had stopped at exactly 9:30. So it couldn't have been Greg!"

Fran nodded unhappily. "And you're his alibi!" she said quietly.

CHAPTER FIVE

The little group straggled along, block after sloping block, toward Anne Torgerson's home. Bart and Ms. Williams led the way, with him invariably taking her elbow whenever they crossed a street. Then came Mickey, Suki and Harry, followed closely by Jane and Sandy. By the time they reached the iron fence that surrounded the Torgerson house, Bart was beginning to be a bit short of breath.

The yard was dark, with great shrubs along the path from the sidewalk to the front porch. And the house, as they could tell even in the gloom of the evening, was an old one, with a veranda curving around from the front to both sides.

As the others proceeded up the path, Jane and Sandy lingered to examine the enormous, wrought-iron gate. Sandy remarked that his father, who was a blacksmith, would have loved to make a gate that beautiful and that strong. Just then two figures appeared out of the darkness, almost as if they had been following, along the sidewalk, not far behind.

It was a boy and a girl. "Hi," said the boy, addressing Sandy.

Sandy recognized the voice as Link's. And he knew promptly too that the girl with her hair tucked up under her huge-visored cap was Casey. "Hi," he said, not sure of what to do.

"Who're your friends?" Jane asked.

"Oh," Sandy replied, startled by Jane's unexpected question. "Right— this is Casey and this is Link. And this here's Jane."

The new acquaintances nodded at each other but said nothing. Then Link gestured with his head toward the house and said, "You going in there?"

All Sandy said was, "Mmmm."

"What're you going to do in there?" Casey asked. Her voice was no more threatening than Link's. She just sounded as if she were curious.

"Talk," Sandy replied.

"Talk? About what? We like to talk."

"Oh, all sorts of things. It's our social studies class. We talk about society, and the law — things like that." To himself, Sandy said, "That should scare them away." Yet he noticed that he wasn't afraid of them, and couldn't help liking them in some ways.

"Oh, the law!" Casey exclaimed. "I'd like that! Could we come?"

"Why not?" Link said, as if Casey had asked him instead of Sandy.

Sandy looked in bewilderment at Jane, but Jane merely shrugged and repeated Link's "Why not?"

"Let me ask the others," Sandy said.

"Who're they?" Link wanted to know.

"Oh," said Sandy, "some of the kids from our class. And Ms. Williams— that's our teacher. And Bart. He's a retired judge. His regular name's Bertoia."

"Hey, Judge Bertoia — we know *him*!" Casey exclaimed. "Well, not really — not personally. But we know some people who know him very well."

Casey's comments did nothing to dispel Sandy's misgivings. Meanwhile, the other members of the group were standing on the porch, waiting for him and Jane to finish their conversation with the strangers.

Sandy trotted up the path to the porch steps and called up to Ms. Williams, "There are some guys I know — they're wondering if it'd be all right if they came in with us."

Ms. Williams momentarily looked dubious, and Mickey scowled, saying, "We don't need to bring anyone in with us." Then Ms. Williams threw up her hands and said, "Oh, well, the more the merrier, I guess."

"Famous last words," Sandy thought, as he turned and waved to his friends to join the others.

Bart pressed the doorbell, and was rewarded with the sound of chimes rather than a ring. Almost immediately the door opened, and there stood both Mr. and Mrs. Torgerson, looking very friendly and hospitable. Anne's parents ushered the group into the living room, and introduced everyone to Mr. Torgerson's brother. Spencer Torgerson appeared to be considerably older than Anne's father. He sat in a large, leather armchair, on the arm of which hung a walking cane.

There was some shuffling about as people chose their seats, or sat on the floor in front of the fireplace, which was unlit. From the kitchen, separated from the living room by a heavy swinging door, they could hear Mrs. Torgerson call out, "Anne, dear, come help me with this tray." Link and Casey kept to themselves, studying the collection of crystal sculptures, Mr. Torgerson's butterfly collection, and Mrs. Torgerson's paintings, including one of Anne. Link was fascinated by the portrait, in which Anne was seated in such a way that the top of her body was twisted about and facing in just the opposite direction from the rest of her. "Look," he said in a hushed voice to Casey and pointing at the same time to Anne, "It's her. And she's in a spiral, like a — like a candle flame, almost." They stared at it a while longer, then Casey took him by the hand and they moved on to look at Anne's uncle's collection of ancient dueling pistols.

Just as Anne finished distributing the glasses of soda to the younger members of the group, her mother entered from the kitchen with a tray of wine goblets for the grown-ups. Link and Casey by now had settled down together on the cold hearth and quietly sipped their drinks, although still more absorbed in the room than in the conversation.

"Anne," Jane whispered, "I know your uncle's name is Spencer, but what's your father's name?"

"Geoffrey," said Anne with a little laugh. "And *his* father's name was Randolph."

They were sitting next to Anne's uncle, who couldn't help overhearing the conversation. "It's a family tradition," he said. "In each generation, the oldest boy is named either Spencer or Randolph. They alternate."

"You have family traditions?" exclaimed Jane.

"Of course," Anne replied. "Doesn't everyone?"

"You've got family traditions — wow," said Mickey. "How far back do they go?"

Spencer Torgerson peered in his kindly way at Mickey. "Quite far back, I'd say. But with traditions, it doesn't really matter, does it?"

Anne's father added, "Traditions are just longstanding arrangements. Once they're settled, they just stay on, and all we have to do is tend to them."

Casey suddenly remembered that she was still wearing her cap. She quickly removed it, and a mass of brown hair tumbled down over her shoulders and framed her long, narrow face, with its short upper lip and knowing, restless eyes.

Anne's mother put her hand lightly on Anne's shoulder. "Traditions link the generations together," she said. (It occurred to Suki that each of Mrs. Torgerson's words was modulated differently; each sentence was pronounced as if it were a melody.) "In a society where people belong together, they know how to do things together in the same way. That's how traditions link us to our ancestors."

Spencer Torgerson smiled approvingly. "The music's the same, generation after generation," he remarked. "Only the performers change — and the performances."

Bart had almost finished his drink, and Mrs. Torgerson quickly refilled his glass. "I couldn't agree more," he declared firmly. "We all have our duties and responsibilities."

"We have our duties to our children," Anne's father asserted in his business-like way," and they have their duties to us. It's an exchange. Mutual — reciprocal — you know what I mean."

"Parents look after their children," said Spencer Torgerson, "when the children are too young to look after themselves, and children look after their parents when the parents are too old to look after themselves. Look at me. I never married, never had children, and now I've no one to feel responsible for me. I'm just lucky I've got such a good brother and sister-in-law." Mrs. Torgerson smiled, and then Bart caught her eye and nodded at her approvingly.

"Y'know," said Harry, as if he'd been mulling over the comments that had just been made, "It's not always that way, is it? I mean, aren't there times when someone does something for you, and yet you don't have an obligation to do something in return to *them*, but to someone altogether different?"

"Harry," said Ms. Williams, "if you don't give us some kind of example, we won't have the slightest idea what you're talking about."

"Well, take getting an education. Adults are supposed to see to it that their children get an education. But then what are the kids supposed to do in return? Educate their parents?"

"Harry, you're absolutely right!" Mrs. Torgerson said. "I'm grateful to my parents for the education they provided for me, and I believe the best way I can show my gratitude to them is to provide for Anne's education."

"Hey," Anne exclaimed, "it's just like with my father and my grandfather: their names alternate. So some duties aren't reciprocal; they just alternate from one generation to the next."

"Must it be," Suki wondered aloud, "that it's always grownups who give the education and always the kids who receive it? Couldn't they discover things together?"

Mrs. Torgerson frowned. "If that were so," she said, "we wouldn't need schools."

"Wherever education happens—" Casey's voice sounded small, coming from far across the room, "that's where it's at. It can happen anywhere."

Mrs. Torgerson caught her brother-in-law's eye across the room, and called out with a smile, "How rare it is these days — isn't it, Spencer? — to see young people excited by great and noble ideas!"

Spencer Torgerson merely said, "Humph!"

But Fran, who was standing by the hearth, whirled about, stared at Anne's uncle for a moment, then asked, "Oh, I don't know. Is it any more rare than to find older folks excited by great and noble emotions?" When Mrs. Torgerson chose not to reply, Fran added, "But I guess we could all do better."

Some seconds went by during which no one spoke. Then Link said, "All this talk about this generation owing that generation, and how everything's mutual! What happens when no one feels like they owe you nothin'?"

"Society owes you an education," Spencer Torgerson said gravely; "it doesn't owe you a living. But I'm sure that, when you finish school, you'll find all the opportunities you could ask for."

"I *am* finished with school, and I don't see no opportunities," Link said. His voice wasn't loud, but it was harsh.

"You're finished with school?" Anne's father looked shocked. "But aren't you part of this class?"

"Naw," Link replied, with a short laugh. "We just thought we'd drop in. Isn't that one of the rights of a dropout, to be able to drop back in anytime?"

"But I thought—" Anne's father began, and he looked at Ms. Williams, half-puzzled, half-accusingly.

"They're our guests," Ms. Williams replied softly. "We thought you wouldn't mind."

"But they're truants!" Mr. Torgerson continued to look shocked, and he turned back to Casey and Link. "Where do you live?"

"Across town."

"But where? With your families?"

"We got no families," said Link.

"So where do you live?"

"Where we can."

"And how do you live?"

Link grinned. "We hustle. But as little as possible. We don't like doin' it more than we have to."

"You steal?"

Link looked aggrieved, but he restrained himself, and a little smile played around the corners of Casey's mouth. Then she said mischievously, "See, we figure, everybody's ripped us off, so what does it matter if we rip them off a little? Like you said before, it's mutual."

"You should finish your education," said Mrs. Torgerson.

"What education?" Casey replied bitterly. "It was just a shuffle."

"You'll end up behind bars," Spencer Torgerson remarked.

Link nodded. "The cops hassle us a lot. But so far we've been lucky." Then he added, "Funny thing, most of the guys I know don't think they'll go to jail for ripping someone off."

"Most juveniles *aren't* punished, even when they're caught," Bart said. "The law doesn't have to be severe, but at the very least it ought to be consistent. The inevitable consequences of committing a crime ought to be demonstrated quickly and certainly to young people. They should see that punishment follows crime just as inevitably as a conclusion follows from a pair of premises."

"I don't see why guys who drop out of school have to get involved in crime," Mickey protested. "Heck, there's always welfare and unemployment compensation."

"Welfare — ugh!" said Link. "Look, if I had a job, I wouldn't even think about ripping anyone off!"

"So why don't you *get* a job?" Mr. Torgerson demanded.

"Huh, you gotta be kidding." Link was flushed and indignant now. "Like I want a job repairing cars, they give me paper-and-pencil tests which they *know* I can't pass, but you don't need papers and pencils to fix cars. Or they ask for my diploma, and they *know* I got no diploma! I wanted to be an electrician's helper, and can you imagine, they asked for my *credentials*! Don't you see, first they make the system so that only the right people get credentials, and then, because we don't have the credentials, we don't get the opportunities and the jobs!"

"It's like holding someone under water and then punishing them for drowning," said Casey.

Once again the room fell silent. Then Casey and Link got to their feet. "We— we gotta go," he said. "We just thought we'd drop in and sort of look around, that's all."

"Thanks for the soda," Casey added. "I was real thirsty."

Mrs. Torgerson rose, went to the front door with them, and shook hands briefly with Casey. Then Sandy and Suki joined Link and Casey on the front porch and accompanied them down the walk to the gate.

"I'm glad you came," Suki said. "You said things we needed to hear—"

"—not that we agreed with what you said one bit," Sandy added, to everyone's amusement.

"I know we pushed our way in," Casey said, addressing Suki. "But if school had been like that — you know, talking about ideas — I wouldn't have left. Do you think, if you have another one of these some time, we could sort of drop in again?"

Suki looked inquiringly at Sandy, who simply shrugged and said to Casey and Link with a grin, "Oh, man, now that I know where you guys are coming from, you don't worry me one bit. Sure, let's get together again — just keep your hands off my bike, that's all."

ii

Maria answered the phone, then called out, "Mark! It's for you. It's Fran."

Mark mumbled, "Hi" into the phone.

"The latest isn't too good," Fran said. She sounded grim. "When word got out about the books in Greg's locker, he accused you of trying to frame him by putting them there."

"That's stupid," Mark scoffed. "No one will believe him."

"Well, you haven't heard all of it yet. Sure, the part about the books isn't so serious. But now he claims that he *saw* you messing up the school that night! Claims he didn't say so before because of what Lisa might think if the accusation came from him."

"This is wild," said Mark.

"Maybe so, but now you've got a witness against you, and you were caught by the cops at the scene of the crime. So the case against you hasn't gotten any better — it's just gotten worse!"

"Well, what about him? Wasn't he somewhere around there too that night? It *could* have been him."

"Sure, but he's got an alibi. The cops figure the damage was done around 9:30. That's when the electric clock was broken. But Lisa admits she was with Greg at 9:30. So how do you figure that one?"

Mark reflected for a moment, then said, "I don't believe it. Look, couldn't this have happened: To give himself an alibi, Greg went back in the building and set the hands of the clock back to 9:30, because he knew that was the time he'd been with Lisa, and she'd admit it?"

"It *could* have happened that way—" Fran began doubtfully.

"Yeah, I know," Mark agreed. "I just have no evidence that that's how it happened."

"There's something else, Mark," said Fran. "The fact that Greg keeps trying to get you into trouble — all it proves is how jealous he is. But it *doesn't* prove that he's the one who wrecked the school. Maybe *you* think so, but you'd have a hard time proving it."

Mark was silent. Then Fran demanded, "Is there anything you aren't telling us?"

"No."

"Are you covering up for someone?"

"No."

"Did *you* do it?"

"No." Then he added, a note of bitterness in his voice, "People are saying I flipped out! They think I did it!" He imitated someone in a singsong voice: "When you flip out, you may not remember anything that happened."

"So," said Fran, "what have we got? We don't think you did it, but the evidence points to you. We think Greg might have done it, but the evidence doesn't point to him." Then she added, "And I think the idea that it might have been Lisa is ridiculous."

"Is it possible—" said Mark hesitantly, "that it was someone else?"

"Sure it's possible. Lots of people might have it in for the schools. But where would we start looking for them?"

"I think maybe we ought to start," Mark said, "by talking to Sandy."

iii

Lisa and Ms. Williams encountered each other in the dairy section of the supermarket.

"You do the family shopping?" Ms. Williams asked.

"On Thursdays my mother leaves me a shopping list," Lisa answered ruefully. "She doesn't come home from work until 5:30. But I don't really mind. It's a chance to get out of the house."

"I shop just for myself," said Ms. Williams. "Not that it matters. I don't eat much."

Something in the way she said it caused Lisa to look at her sharply. "She looks the same as she always does," Lisa thought, noting the brown hair caught as usual with a barrette from the 5 and 10, the granny glasses, and the familiar sweater, straight skirt and hush puppies.

Suddenly Lisa felt that it was all right to talk to Ms. Williams, even to confide in her, if necessary. "Ms. Williams," she said, "I'm sorry I'm not with it in class these days. My mind wanders so much."

"Everyone knows about you and Mark and Greg," said Ms. Williams. "It'll straighten itself out in time."

"But it's all so ugly," Lisa remarked, absent-mindedly studying the contents of a container of yogurt. "I despise Greg — and he knows it. And too much has happened for me ever to feel right with Mark again. Oh, how could I ever have gotten myself into such a mess?"

"It's funny," Ms. Williams said, almost half to herself, "that's what I was just saying to myself when you came over."

"You mean—"

Ms. Williams stopped to clean her glasses and for a moment, as she did, she glanced at Lisa. It was the first time Lisa had noticed her eyes; they weren't exactly pretty, but they were lively and intelligent. Then the glasses went back on, and the mask took over again.

"Nothing's happening as I planned it," Ms. Williams remarked with a faint sigh. "All summer I worked on my lesson plans, and the social studies class is going on its own crazy course — I don't even know from day to day what's happening in it."

"You don't like the way it's going?"

Ms. Williams managed a little smile. "I didn't say that. Actually, it's kind of exciting. But it's completely different from the way I was taught to teach. If it wasn't for Mr. Swing and Bart, I'd never have dared to allow it."

"Mr. Swing has encouraged you—" Lisa began.

"Oh, has he encouraged me!"

Lisa had a glimmer of understanding. "To do what?" she asked boldly.

Ms. Williams felt a need to be more cautious. "To grow. To develop. To be more adventurous."

Lisa stared at her, and was unable to keep from breaking into a grin. Then Ms. Williams said, "Oh, it must be obvious to everyone, but I'd rather do without that kind of attention."

"And Bart?"

"Don't jump to any conclusions about Bart. He's a perfect gentleman. But it's like he's obsessed; he wants to talk about society and education and things like that morning, noon and night! I can't get rid of him!"

"And what about you?" Lisa asked, after thinking to herself, "No use stopping here — might as well go all the way."

Ms. Williams didn't take offense. She just laughed and said, "Oh, me, I'm just a teacher. Right now, that's all that I'm thinking about. I could be really good at it, if people would let me. But somehow, the way I was taught to teach no longer seems right, and I'm not sure what it is I ought to be doing."

"You seem to like kids; that's important. And you like ideas; that's important."

"I seem to like kids," Ms. Williams repeated rather vacantly. "Yes, sure. But it would be better to say that I like people. You see, that's one of my problems. I can't tell the difference between kids and grownups. And maybe there is no difference. Maybe grownups are just people who've spent a longer time than other people have, puzzling over questions to which there are no answers."

Lisa put a carton of milk into her shopping cart. She would have liked to talk longer with Ms. Williams, but Ms. Williams said, "I've got to get back to grading my papers. I hope you didn't mind all the great revelations about my torrid personal life."

Lisa just grinned and said nothing. She knew she would think for the rest of the evening about having acquired a friend.

CHAPTER SIX

Mark flew up the stairs, two steps at a time, and sprawled panting in an armchair.

"Where've you been?" Maria demanded plaintively. "Dinner's been ready for a half-hour now."

Ignoring the question, Mark got to his feet, threw a few playful punches at Maria, who stood staring at him unamused, her hands on her hips, and proceeded to the kitchen, where he greeted his parents with a brief "Hi, what's new?" at the same time as he tried to keep Maria from mischievously pulling out his shirttail.

"What's new yourself," Mrs. Jahorski responded good-humoredly. 'Get washed up."

Mark nodded, disappeared into the bathroom, and appeared a moment later. "Mark," said Maria, exasperated, "why does all the dirt have to end up on the towel? Didn't you ever hear of soap and water?" She finally relaxed and grinned only when he made a face at her across the table.

"So, Mom," he said, while attacking the mashed potatoes, "did you finally tell them today how to run the business?"

"Just about," she replied, laughing. "We had an executive meeting — sat around a big table in the Board of Directors room. When they asked for any new items of business, I proposed we reconsider the move."

"Well all *right*," said Mark. "How'd they take it?"

"Oh, as I expected, they wouldn't even discuss it. They just tabled it."

"Tabled it?" Maria looked puzzled, "what's that mean?"

"It's a way of sidestepping the issue," said Mr. Jahorski. "They didn't want to say yes or no."

"Like when we ask you for something and you say, 'We'll see'?"

Maria's father laughed. "Just about."

"Do they table your proposals in the library like that?"

Mr. and Mrs. Jahorski exchanged glances for a moment, then he said to Maria, "I don't often get to make proposals about the future of the library, I'm afraid."

"Why not?"

"Well, I'm not in that sort of position."

"What sort of position are you in?"

"Oh, Maria," said Mark, "don't you know *anything*? Mom's an executive and Dad's a— Dad's a—"

"See," Maria replied. "You're so smart! You don't know any better than I do. And *must* you always talk with your mouth full?"

"Dad!" Mark appealed, "can you get her off my back?"

Mr. Jahorski looked mildly at Maria. "I guess the best word would be 'administrator.' It's a nicer word that 'bureaucrat'."

"So what's the difference between an executive and an administrator?" Maria wanted to know.

Maria had hardly finished asking her question when Mark replied, "Executives make policies and administrators carry them out."

Mrs. Jahorski looked amused. "In practice, it's more often that executives are people who fail to make the policies that are needed, and administrators are people who fail to carry out the ones that are made." She reconsidered her comment, her fork poised in the air. "Well, that's a caricature, I suppose, although there is some truth in it."

"Mom, I wasn't necessarily talking about how things are in practice," said Mark. "I meant ideally. Ideally, executives make policies. Ideally, administrators carry them out."

"Carry out the executives?" asked Maria, and stuck her tongue out at Mark, who screwed up his face with a look of pain.

"Executives are supposed to stand up for what they believe," said Mark. "They have to be ready to take a position on everything."

Mr. Jahorski offered him the plate of dinner rolls, but Mark shook his head. "And an administrator?" he asked Mark.

"He has rules to follow. Like maybe he's a chief teller in the bank, or the head of a branch post office — something like that. But there are always rules that tell him just what to do. There's a book he follows, or a code — and there's always a boss over him he can turn to."

"Hmmm," mused Mrs. Jahorski, "tell me then, are administrators impartial?"

"Of course!"

"And so executives are partial?"

Mark scowled, "Aw, Mom, you're just playing with words. But I'd say yes in the sense that executives have their own point of view, and they see things from that point of view, and are willing to fight for what they think is right. But an administrator just has to do his job and not ask why."

There was a pause, which Mark took advantage of to soak up his gravy with the remainder of a piece of bread.

"Mark," said Maria, "if administrators don't ask why — if they don't question — is that part of their job, or is it something they do because they're afraid to lose their job?"

Mark grinned. "I guess you're right — I'm confusing what's true in practice with what's ideal."

"Well, let me carry this a bit further," said Mr. Jahorski. "Are you saying that administrators *don't* believe in anything, or that they're expected to act *as if* they didn't believe in anything?"

Mark wanted to answer, but Maria cut him short. "Let me!" she insisted. She turned to her father. "An administrator has to believe in the system he's working in. And if he believes in the system, he accepts all of its rules and regulations."

"That's what's wrong with the system," Mark replied heatedly. "It means change can never start at the bottom, it can only come from the top."

"Mark," his sister explained to him patiently, "if you were in the army — just a corporal or a sergeant, say — how *could* you expect to change it? And it's the same if you work for a big corporation, or a government agency, or a — or a school library. Of course, if you don't like the way policies are being made, you can always write a letter to the newspaper about it."

"Oh, sure," Mark said sarcastically.

"Mark," Mrs Jahorski said, "in practice there are lots of administrators who question policies, and executives who're afraid to stand up for their beliefs. But I think that, whatever kind of position of authority people are in, they've got to be able to think about what they're doing. I'll never be convinced by anybody who draws a line and says all the thinking is to be done by the people on one side of the line, and none by the people on the other side of it."

Maria had been listening to her mother very intently. Now she remarked slowly, "To give Mark his due, maybe he didn't mean that some people think and others don't. Maybe what he meant is that administrators are expected to think, but they're just not expected to think for themselves."

Mark looked at his sister approvingly. "What happened to you?" he said. "You're really thinking."

Maria ignored the sarcasm. "All I'm trying to say is, maybe administrators could be encouraged to think for themselves, and maybe executives, instead of being so quick to say what they believe, could be encouraged to do some more thinking."

"Well!" said Mr. Jahorski, "when you put it that way, it's even better than dessert!"

ii

"Steve," said Mrs. O'Mara, "please don't get too comfortable in the living room. The kids from Laura's class will be here any minute now, and I don't know who all else they'll be bringing with them."

"Don't get too comfortable," grumbled her husband. "So what am I supposed to do, act like a doorman at a hotel? Hold the door open for them? Don't I have a right to be tired, tramping all day from one end of the city to the other?"

"Daddy, why do you always talk in questions?" Mary asked.

"You do too," Laura laughed. "You're your father's daughter, all right."

"Which brings me to my next question," Mr. O'Mara went on, settling down in the reclining chair so that his feet were as high as his head. "What's this your mother tells me about your going motorcycling with Trini Rodriguez?" He held up his hand, the palm facing Mary. "Now I know what you're going to say: you're a high school senior and you can go where you want to and do whatever you like. Well, all I've got to say is, no you can't, not while you live here." Then he added, "See, I'm not asking questions now, I'm telling you."

Mary looked irritated. "What's wrong with my going motorcycling?"

"It's dangerous, that's what wrong," her father replied. "Especially with that fool, Trini."

"Steve," Mrs. O'Mara said anxiously, "must we talk about this now? People are coming."

"People have to take me as I am," he replied. "They want to come visit me at home, they have to take me as they find me. I don't cover up for nobody."

"Daddy," said Laura, "There'll be my social studies teacher, and there'll be that judge I told you about, remember? But most of all, there'll be my friends. If you and Mary are going to hassle over something, I wish you'd let it wait until after."

Mr. O'Mara looked unmoved. "Tell me again why these people are coming busting in on us, would you mind?"

"Daddy!" Laura wailed, "I asked you and Mom, and you yourself said it would be okay, so I invited them."

"And what do they want to ask me about?"

"I don't know that they want to ask you about anything. We're all in Ms. Williams' social studies class, and we thought we might learn more about society if we talked it over with our families than if we tried to read about it by ourselves in the classroom. Oh, Daddy," Laura was on the verge of tears now. "Why must everything be so difficult?"

"Look," her father replied, "do *I* make things difficult? I'm sitting here, in my own home, not bothering anyone, and I've got one daughter running around like a crazy on a motorcycle, and the other bringing a bunch of school people for me to entertain. Now, if *you* want to entertain them, fine. But I'm not going to be any different from the way I always am. I doubt it's the first time any of them have seen a father straightening out his kids."

The doorbell rang, and Laura's classmates entered, followed by Ms. Williams and Bart. Hardly were the introductions over than Mr. O'Mara remarked, much as Laura had feared, about the “trials of being a parent in this day and age.”

“Ah,” said Bart, “I could tell you some stories—”

“It's not unusual for members of the same family to see things differently,” Ms. Williams interrupted.

“What are the chief things they see differently?” Fran asked, a faintly mischievous glint in her eyes.

“Oh, *I* can tell you *that*,” Lisa announced. “There are three things my mother and I *always* disagree about: what I believe, what I do, and who my friends are.”

Mr. O'Mara slapped his hand down on the maple arm of his chair. “Very good! That's exactly what we're always telling Mary and Laura. Until kids are grown up, parents have a right to tell them what to believe, and what to do, and who to have as friends.”

His wife laid her hand on his and chuckled. “Not so fast, Steve. There's a difference between what we say and what we do.” She turned to the group. “You see, we don't really tell our girls who to have as friends. But there are some people we do object to, so we tell our girls who *not* to have as friends. And in the same way, we tell them what *not* to believe, and what *not* to do.” Then she added, “You see, Steve's bark is really so much worse than his bite.”

Fran looked sharply at Mrs. O'Mara. “So what you're saying is, your kids can propose what they like, and then you veto what you *don't* like?”

“I guess that's about it.”

“Shouldn't it be the other way around?” Bill asked. “Shouldn't parents say the way they think their kids ought to live, and then let the kids object if there's something they don't like?”

“But that would give the kids the veto power instead of the parents, and *that* wouldn't be right,” said Randy.

There was a prolonged silence.

Then Lisa observed, “It's ridiculous to apply terms like ‘veto power” to the way things are worked out within a family. After all, the relationship between parents and kids isn't anything like the relationship between a president and congress.”

“Lisa's right,” Luther remarked. “These things we're talking about like they're so simple — they're really very complicated. Take this business of friends. If my mother didn't like one of my friends, she'd give me reasons why she didn't like him, and I'd give her *my* reasons, and then we'd discuss the whole thing to see whose reasons were better.”

Mr. O'Mara's reclining chair tilted straight back up with a loud thud, and Mr. O'Mara looked at Luther with a scowl. “That's exactly how Mary and Laura talk! They don't seem to understand that parents have a responsibility for bringing children up right! It's just *because* kids aren't responsible and parents are, that kids should do as they're told!”

Bart raised both hands in a peacemaking gesture. “But maybe they have a point.

Maybe there should be a line, see? And on the other side of the line, in certain other matters, the kids could have some authority."

"How would that work?" Bill asked. "I don't see it. What matters are you talking about?"

"Well, take the distinction Lisa introduced, between what she believes and what she does. Now, why not draw a line between those two things, and say that kids can *believe* whatever they like, but they have to *do* what their parents tell them to do?" Bart looked around him at the faces in the room, then remarked, "I can see that I haven't satisfied anyone."

"Sure," said Fran, "because that way of putting it leaves just as many problems as before."

"Like what?" Bart challenged.

"Well, take that business of what I believe. See, as far as I'm concerned, that breaks down into two things: having thoughts and expressing them. Now, expressing them is something I *do*, according to you, isn't that right?"

"Before I answer, could you tell me a little more?"

"Sure. What I'm saying is this: I want to be able to think for myself! But I also want to be able to express what I think. So it just doesn't seem right to me that there should be some matters where I'm free to believe, but not to say what I believe."

"Why do you think that thought and expression are so closely connected?"

"Closely connected? I think they're *invisible*!" Fran exclaimed.

"In-*di*-visible," Ms. Williams murmured.

"Right," Fran laughed, "in*di*visible. Sorry about that. But this is what I'd say to your question. In a society, you can't have freedom of thought without freedom of expression. Because if people can't express what they think, sooner or later they'll just stop thinking it"

"If you can't keep your thoughts in your head without bleating about them to everyone," observed Mr. O'Mara, "maybe they weren't worth thinking about in the first place."

"Daddy," said Laura, "let her finish!"

Mr. O'Mara waved in Fran's direction. "Be my guest."

Fran nodded. "Anyway. In the second place, you can't have freedom of expression without having freedom of thought."

"Aw," Randy jeered, "that's just plain ridiculous! Who ever heard of a society where there was freedom of expression but no freedom of thought?"

"It could happen," Fran replied. "It could very well happen. Like, you could be brought up not to think for yourself. And even when you were grown up, you'd only think what you were told to think. So, in that kind of society, it would be perfectly safe to let you have freedom of expression, because you'd never have anything contrary to say."

"There *have* been societies like that," said Ms. Williams.

"There still are," Lisa responded, looking at Fran with admiration.

"Bart," said Bill, "aren't freedom of thought and expression covered under the Constitution?"

"In general, yes. However, there are some sticky areas. Lots of times, people will do all sorts of odd things — you know, like burning their draft cards or advocating strikes — and then there's a big controversy over whether that sort of thing is protected by the First Amendment."

"And do you think," Bill continued, "that there are good reasons for the First Amendment?"

"Very good reasons," Bart answered.

"How about the Constitution itself? Are there good reasons for it?"

"Excellent ones. But what's your point?"

"Oh," said Bill, "I was just thinking about what Luther said before, about reasons. When we appeal to an authority, like the Constitution, it's because we know it's backed up by good reasons. But isn't the same thing true of parents? They generally have good reasons on their side, but they may not know it. It's just a matter of finding them."

"What's *your* name again?" Mr. O'Mara asked.

"Bill Beck."

"At last someone here has said something that makes some sense!"

"Oh, Daddy," said Laura, with a sigh. "All it takes to make you happy is just to find one person who agrees with you!"

iii

The small delegation, which consisted of Fran, Mark and Sandy, got off the bus and ascended the two flights of marble steps leading to the Court House.

"Are you sure the appointment is for 4:30?" Mark asked Fran. It wasn't the first time he had asked her, but she understood his being nervous.

"Like I showed you before, I wrote it down,"she replied. "And we're way early. We've got a good fifteen minutes."

They entered the Court House, and stood huddled together in the center of the rotunda. They felt tiny and unimportant beneath the great marble dome. The stone floors and huge granite columns added to the impressiveness of the rotunda, in the middle of which was an awesome sculpture of Justice, blindfolded and holding her scales before her.

"I've never understood why she's blindfolded," Fran remarked. "I'd expect Love to be blind — but why Justice?"

"I think it's to show she's impartial," said Sandy. "She concentrates just on the merits of the case. All other differences don't count, as far as she's concerned."

"Huh!" Mark grunted. Then he added, "If you can't see what the differences are, how can you be sure they're not relevant? Boy, it would seem to me, if there's any area where you've got to take everything into account, it's the administration of justice!"

At last they located a bank of elevators, and one of the elevator operators told them where Judge Bertoia's chambers were. She even showed them, when they had gotten off at the 7th floor, how many doors down the corridor they should go.

The corridor was long and winding. Sometimes, too, there were ramps to go up and ramps to go down. On the way they passed several courtrooms. The swinging doors had glass windows they could peer through, and they could see the courts in session. In one they saw a man sitting in the front row with his hands manacled. In another, they saw a boy being taken away from his family by some guards; he and his family were crying and trying to hold on to one another. In still another they saw a judge, with his black robes, rising to leave the bench, whereupon everyone in the courtroom stood up. With each courtroom they observed, Fran, Mark and Sandy grew more solemn.

Finally they arrived at the judge's chambers, which simply bore the number 743, and a secretary led them to Bart's inner office. They sat down in front of him, ill at ease, not knowing where to begin. Then Fran conquered her inhibitions and said, "Judge—"

He didn't let her finish. "I'm Bart to you in the classroom; I don't see why I have to be anything different here."

"Okay," Fran responded, feeling a trifle more relaxed. "What we want you to know is, we've been making an investigation of Mark's case, because we feel he's innocent and we want to clear him." She drew a deep breath. "So we figured, if you'd tell us how far you've gotten, we'd be willing to share what we have with you."

Bart laughed, leaning far back in his chair. "How far I've gotten? I haven't gotten far at all. As far as Mark's case is concerned, I don't know much more than when it was first assigned to me. Somehow, I seem to have learned a lot of other things, but not that." He peered at them inquisitively. "But I take it you've uncovered some things I should know?"

Fran winced. "I wish I could say we have evidence of some kind that would clear Mark, or some kind of proof that it was someone else. But we really don't."

"Well, then," said Bart, "it looks like we don't have much to tell each other. So I suppose you want to know what's going to happen to Mark?"

"Now wait a minute," Sandy protested. "Not so fast. We didn't come here to find out what you were going to do to Mark. We came to find out if there was anything you could tell us about how to help Mark out."

"Fine," said Bart. "Just give me some idea of what you're looking for."

"Okay, I know one thing you can do for us," Sandy replied. "Show us a list of the times and places of all the cases of vandalism that were reported during the past year."

"No problem. I have a report right here on my desk that contains just that information." Bart opened the top drawer of his desk and took out a thick folder, from which he extracted a sheaf of papers. These he handed to Sandy, who studied them intently, with Fran looking over one shoulder and Mark over the other.

"It doesn't tell us anything," Mark finally exclaimed in despair.

Sandy too looked up in discouragement. "Just a bunch of break-ins."

But Fran shook her head and continued to squint at the papers which Sandy had spread out on Bart's desk. "These dates — I can't tell anything from them. Bart, you got a calendar?"

Bart produced the calendar from the check register in his checkbook. Fran painstakingly compared each date with the calendar, marking down next to each crime report the day of the week on which it was committed. Then she looked up at Bart and said slowly, "Maybe this is silly. Maybe it doesn't mean anything at all. But you've got nine reports of vandalism here, and seven of them are on Fridays, going back over the last 12 months. And of those seven, six were school vandalisms."

"Okay," said Bart, "so what are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking that maybe there's someone who has a pattern of breaking into schools on Friday nights."

"Right!" said Sandy, enthusiastically. "If that's so, what happens to the theory about Mark's motive? People have been saying that Mark must have suddenly flipped out. But it looks from this that whoever broke into the school that night had a habit of Friday night break-ins."

Bart stroked his chin. "Interesting. I mean it. Of course, it could be just a coincidence. But if your hypothesis is correct, we're probably dealing with someone with a long-standing grudge against schools. Now, where would we be likely to find such a person?"

"Sandy," Fran said with a grin, "it looks like you've really got your work cut out for you!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mickey's father's store was in a district made up largely of businesses and factories. Not many people lived there, although some of the old warehouse lofts had been turned into studios or apartments. But the street on which the store was located was a rather busy one, and a glance at the storefronts that lined the narrow sidewalks would reveal that very few of the shops were unoccupied.

Attached to the door of the shop was an old-fashioned bell, so that when Mickey and his friends entered, a pleasant "ding-ding" announced their arrival. They surveyed with satisfaction the small room that made up the shop's entire floor space; it was evenly divided into four quarters. In the front, there were used books and records. In the back, on the right, were some racks of jeans and other denims, while on the left was a small health-foods lunch counter. Business tended to fall off as closing time approached, and they found Mickey's father alone behind the counter.

Mickey had explained to his friends that they would stop off at the store first for a chat with his father, who would be unable to attend the gathering at the apartment because of a business appointment later in the evening. There were eight stools at the counter, exactly enough for Ms. Williams, Bart and the six students. After the introductions, Mickey's father served everyone some frozen yogurt "on the house," just as Mickey had promised he would.

But Mickey wasn't satisfied with the frozen yogurt. "Hey, Pop," he called out, still licking his spoon, "how about a milkshake?"

"Sure," his father replied lightly, "what'll it be — a bean curd milkshake or a wheat germ milkshake?"

"Aw, Pop," Mickey groaned, "don't you have anything here for people who aren't health freaks?"

"Well, how about a brewer's yeast milkshake — in goat's milk? Ver-ry tas-ty!"

Mickey's friends watched this interchange with amusement. Mickey went back to licking his spoon morosely, while his father wiped the counter top with a wet rag.

"So what happened in school today, Mickey?" Mr. Minkowski asked, hoping to start a conversation.

"Nothing much. But the guys who were at Laura's house the other night have been arguing over what kids should be allowed to do."

"Aha! So they were discussing freedom!"

"I guess."

"Freedom — you sure hear about it a lot on rock records," said Jane.

"Huh!" Mickey scoffed. "Rock singers! What do *they* know?"

"What does anybody know?" Ms. Williams murmured. "We never take it seriously enough to talk about it and find out."

Mr. Minkowski retied the strings of his apron. "Mickey, could you really manage a milkshake?"

Mickey perked up. "You gotta be kidding—" Then he added, pointing to his friends, "Them too?"

"Of course," his father replied. "An ice cream milkshake to each person who gives me his own definition of freedom — one that doesn't repeat what other people have said. On the house — free!"

"That gives the advantage to the first person who speaks up," Harry said with a grin.

"Fine!" Anne replied. "So let that person be me. What I say is, being free is being able to express yourself. Make mine chocolate."

"Next!" Mr. Minkowski called out, and set to work on the chocolate milkshake.

"You're free," said Jane, "when you can live so no one interferes with you. Strawberry."

"You're free," asserted Sandy, "when you have everything you need and nothing to fear. Chocolate chip, please."

"My turn," Mickey said. "What I say is, I'm free only if I can do the things I want to do." Then he quickly added, "Peach."

Bart said "Har-rumpf," and everyone turned and looked at him expectantly. "You can't be free individuals in an unfree world," he remarked. "To be free is to live in a world under law. Black raspberry."

"Freedom's only where you can help to make the laws you live by, and where the laws make sense," Harry offered. "Chocolate chip mint please, Mr. Minkowski."

Ms. Williams quickly objected. "It's not just the laws that have to make sense. *All* the institutions we live under should make sense. And we should be able to hold them all responsible for what they do. Only then will we be free. Vanilla."

Suki laughed. "It's hardest for me, because I'm the last one, and I'm afraid there are no good definitions that haven't been said. But how about this: you're free when you can do what you think best. And how about — mmm, let me see — I think I'll try a coffee."

"Coffee it is," Mickey's father responded. "But you've got a few ahead of you."

"Mr. Minkowski," Suki asked, "we didn't hear from you. What would your definition of freedom be?"

He looked at her a moment over the tops of his glasses, then said, "I need about six pairs of hands to get all these milkshakes together, and I've got to define freedom at the same time?"

"Aw, c'mon, Pop," Mickey coaxed, "you can do it. Look, you're always showing me how you can rub your stomach, pat your head and wiggle your ears at the same time."

"Okay," Mr. Minkowski said. "I don't like taking orders from anyone, and I don't like giving anyone orders. All I want is to be my own boss. So I claim that's my definition of freedom; being your own boss."

"Mickey, can we go back to your definition for a minute?" Jane asked. "You said you're free only if you can do the things you want to do. But suppose you were a gangster in jail, and you were afraid to leave when your sentence was up, because the mob would be waiting for you. But the warden said you had to go. Would you be free?"

"Of course not," Mickey replied. "I wouldn't be doing what I wanted to do."

"On the other hand," Jane continued, "suppose the warden said you could stay in jail indefinitely if you wanted to. Would you *then* be free?"

"Absolutely!" Mickey insisted.

"So there are people in jail who're free and people walking the streets who're not?" Jane said indignantly. "Ridiculous!"

"Ah," Mickey replied modestly, "I may not always be right, but you've got to admit I'm fascinating. No, no, don't protest — I hate insincerity."

"Hey, you guys, hold it," said Harry. "You're on two different levels. What we've been talking about so far is freedom *in society.* It's the question of how far society can go in controlling individual people. Call it political liberty. That's one way of discussing freedom. But Mickey keeps talking about something very different. He's talking about whether or not everyone's *determined* — you know, whether things *have* to happen the way they do. That's a different kind of freedom, and has to be discussed in a different way."

"Harry's right, Mickey," said Mr. Minkowski.

"Yeah," Jane agreed, "and what's more, that gives us four possibilities. See, we can be either free or determined, in Mickey's sense, and we may or may not have political liberty in Harry's sense. As for me, I say we're determined and don't have political liberty."

"I say," Anne responded quickly, "we're determined, and yet society does allow us political liberty."

"Let me get in on this game," Suki laughed. "I say we're not determined and don't have liberty in society."

"And in my opinion—" Sandy began.

"Oh, boy, I'll bet this'll be a big surprise,"Jane interrupted.

Sandy concluded his sentence unperturbed: "—we're not determined — and we do have political liberty."

"Talk about dumb games!" Mickey exclaimed. "You can take *any* two ideas and combine them in four different ways, but what's the point?"

"Aw, Mickey," said Jane, "we're just trying to keep you honest."

Mickey dredged the last bit of peach ice cream out of the bottom of his milkshake. Then he tapped his head with his finger and said, "Anyone who's deep always has a hard time making it in this world. Everyone else wants him to be as shallow as they are. It ain't easy being heavy. But c'mon, we better shove off. My mom's expecting us."

* * *

The apartment in which Mickey and his family lived was located a few blocks from the store and four flights up. The building had once been a warehouse, but some years previously it had been partially renovated, and several of the lofts had been turned into apartments. The Minkowski apartment also served as a studio for Mickey's mother. There was a skylight, something which Sandy said he'd never seen before. And there were a number of easels standing directly under the skylight, with paintings in various stages of completion (although Jane whispered to Harry that she couldn't tell the finished ones from those that had just been started.)

Then the visitors noticed something else about the apartment. Except for two closed-off sleeping areas at either end, the place was simply one huge room. Apparently the original storage loft had never been renovated so as to make a regular apartment. But the floor had been divided up, by means of wide painted stripes, into four different areas. One area contained the kitchen plus a conversation corner made up of hassocks and a huge bean-bag on the floor, plus a hi-fi set and some records and tapes. The second area was Mickey's, with his small, private sleeping area. The remaining area belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Minkowski, but half of it contained a workbench where Mr. Minkowski practiced his hobby of making walnut and ivory chessmen. The other half, of course, was given over to Mrs. Minkowski's studio. The boundaries of Mrs. Minkowski's area were painted in broad red stripes; Mr. Minkowski's boundaries were green; Mickey's were yellow; and those of the common area were blue.

Anne, of course, was thrilled with the studio. "You never told us your mother was a professional artist!" she told Mickey reproachfully. "My mother paints, too, but she's just an amateur!"

Mickey shrugged. "So what's all the fuss about?"

At that moment his mother called over to him from the far end of the apartment, "Michael, would you *please* get your cat away from my paints? I don't know why he loves that palette so much, but he's always there trying to knock things over."

"Michael!" Sandy repeated in astonishment. "We all call him Mickey."

They settled themselves on whatever seating arrangements there were in the conversation area, and Mrs. Minkowski turned to Mickey. "I hope you all stopped in to your father's store on your way here, as you were supposed to."

"Yep," said Mickey. "We talked for a while, and then we came straight here."

"What'd you talk about?"

Mickey explained that they had discussed freedom, and he called on the others to repeat their definitions. Mrs. Minkowski listened carefully and then remarked, "They all sound right! If there were some way of putting them all together, that would be *my* definition."

"Mrs. Minkowski," said Bart, "I'm not trying to change the subject, but I am curious about the lines on the floor. Could you tell me something about why they're there?"

"Well," she said with a laugh, "when we first moved in here, we always seemed to get in each other's way. And I'm sorry to say that we're all rather quick-tempered in this family, so there was a lot of squabbling, usually over nothing. Finally we decided on the lines, and the separate areas. When my husband or Michael are on their own areas, they're king there. When I'm on my own area, I set the rules. But in the common area, we're all equals."

Bart shook his head slowly and gravely from side to side. "I don't think I could live under such arrangements," he observed.

"Me neither," agreed Harry. But Anne and Jane both said they wished they had something like it, although they were sure their parents would never agree to it.

"Mickey," said Ms. Williams, looking no less sober and anxious for resting comfortably on the bean-bag, "you said earlier this evening that you're free only if you can do the things you want to do. Could you explain that a little more?"

"No problem," Mickey replied agreeably. "Everyone has things they want, right? Everyone has desires, right? Well, those people who can *carry out* their desires are the only ones who're free. Like, say, there are two of us who're thirsty, me and Sandy. And say, I'm the only one who can get a drink. Then I'm the only one who's free."

"So freedom for you is simply a matter of doing as you please?"

"Of course! I'm not free to want or not want. I can't choose, like *not* to be thirsty, or *not* to be hungry. But if I'm already thirsty, then I'm free only if I can get a drink."

"You're so tough, Mickey," Jane broke in. "But what you say and what you do are two different things. Because the truth is, the only time you're free is when you're in this apartment, on the part of the floor that's painted yellow."

For a moment, Mickey looked crushed. An instant later he was his old, jaunty self again. "Let me be the first to admit it, Jane," he said confidently, "you aren't *altogether* wrong. Just about, maybe, but not completely. Still, for you, that's better than average."

"Michael," said Mrs. Minkowski in a voice so low and throaty it sounded almost like a growl.

"Okay, *okay*," Mickey responded quickly. He turned back to Jane. "How about you telling me what you think the yellow line means."

"It's like a fence," said Jane. "Here it's between a family and a member of that family. But there's also a fence — or a line — between a society and each individual member of that society."

"So society is ruler on its side of the line, and each individual is ruler on his or her side of the line?" Bart inquired.

"As long as you don't hurt anyone else, you're your own ruler," Jane responded.

Ms. Williams, her eyes half-shut, had been watching Jane closely. At this point she sat up, looked at Jane alertly, and remarked, "I wonder if we could try out what you're saying — would you mind?" Jane looked puzzled and remained silent, so Ms. Williams continued, "Let's take this line that divides the apartment in half. Now suppose Mrs. Minkowski and Bart and I stay on one side, and we'll be 'society.' The rest of you go on the other side, and you'll be 'individuals'." There were more puzzled looks, but Ms. Williams' game plan was quickly carried out.

"*Now* what do we do?" Sandy asked.

"Each of you, on your side, take turns doing something. Then we on this side will respond. Either we'll cross the line, or we won't Let's just see how it works, okay?"

"Fine with me!" Mickey exclaimed. "I want to be first!" He immediately put both arms around Jane and hugged her. Jane looked at him tolerantly and said, "Michael, dear, you're *so* impetuous!"

Mrs. Minkowski was the first to speak up. "Under the circumstances, we shouldn't cross the line. If you two want to be friends, that's fine with us." Ms. Williams and Bart nodded their agreement.

"Me next!" Jane practically shouted. Mickey's arms were still around her, and she began to make believe she was hitting at him and screaming, "Take your hands off me, you big ape!"

"Take your hands off that poor defenseless girl, Minkowski," Bart growled to everyone's great amusement. "In a case like this, society must interfere. If you hurt your neighbor — or even *plan* to hurt your neighbor, we must intervene." Again, there was no dissent.

"I'd like to be next," said Suki. She sat quite still, with her eyes closed.

"What're you doing?" Ms. Williams inquired.

"Thinking dangerous thoughts," Suki replied, eyes still closed.

"Ah," said Ms. Williams, "that's none of *our* business."

Anne promptly stood on her head. When asked what she was doing, she replied, "I'm just being different, that's all."

"None of our business," said Bart. "You can be as unusual as you like, but so long as you don't hurt others, you're no problem of ours."

"My turn," said Harry. "I'm in favor of changing the world. Period."

"Ah," said Bart, "I get it. You want to see whether we'll respect your freedom of speech, right?"

"Right," said Harry.

"Ordinarily I'd say *absolutely*," Bart began, speaking in a rather tentative way.

"But I'm a minor, so you see a problem, is that right?" Harry persisted in asking.

"Exactly."

There was a prolonged silence, which Ms. Williams finally broke by saying, "Sandy, how about you?"

Sandy sat rubbing his chin, deep in thought. Then he pretended to lift a bottle of something, unscrew the top, and gulp down its contents. He promptly stood up, staggered around the room, and sat down again, with his head between his knees.

No one spoke on society's side of the line. Mickey's mother looked particularly disturbed. Finally she spoke up. "We've got to intervene not just when you endanger other people, but also when you endanger yourselves," she said. "I say there's no question but that we should cross the line and take that bottle away from you."

Mickey looked at the floor and said nothing. But Jane said, "I don't agree. We have to be allowed to make our own mistakes. You can't always be around to protect us. If you try to keep us from hurting ourselves, we'll never be able to have adventures, or to take risks, or to do anything new and different, just because you think it might be dangerous for us."

"I'm very sorry," Mrs. Minkowski replied, "but I don't see it that way at all. If you were grownups, I'd agree with you. But you're not. We're responsible for you until you're old enough to become responsible for yourselves."

Whatever it was that Jane intended to say remained unrevealed, however. She sat tight-lipped and stared at Bart, Ms. Williams and Mrs. Minkowski.

"Ah," said Bart, "come on, now, this is just a game, and we happen to have hit a sticky point. Let's not take it too seriously. We can talk about it more another time."

"Aw, Bart, let's face it," said Sandy, "we'll be talking about it for the rest of our lives. But that's all right, isn't it?"

Just then the door opened and Mickey's father came in, carrying a large paper bag. He reached in and pulled out a container. "Goat's milk ice-cream, anyone?" he asked cheerily.

"Naaaah," said Mickey, imitating a goat as closely as he could. Then he added, "Boy, if I eat any more of that stuff, I'm going to start developing an appetite for tin cans!"

ii

"Sandy," Fran said, "you're our only hope."

Sandy looked at Fran and Mark with an obvious lack of eagerness. "To do what?"

"You're the only one who knows Link and Casey that well, and you know where they live too," Mark replied.

"So?"

"So they know lots of people who just might have heard about those break-ins. Couldn't you at least *ask* them?"

Sandy nodded gravely. "No promises. This could be tricky: what if they were involved? But I'll go over there tonight."

That evening, Sandy picked his way through the throngs of people on the busy sidewalk. Barriers at each end of the block kept cars out, and the merchants were able to display their wares in crates and barrels on the street. There were even a number of pushcarts, where men were hawking pretzels, hot dogs, ice cream, and flavored ices. The odor of roasting chestnuts filled the air. Sandy stopped for a moment to watch some people examine the second-hand clothing on metal racks outside one store. Others were rummaging through boxes of men's bowler hats. Nearby stood a bookstore, in front of which were cartons upon cartons of worn paperbacks. But few people were looking at the books. Many were crowded around a portion of the sidewalk where a man was displaying toy monkeys which bobbed frantically up and down, mechanically doffing their caps and swishing their tails back and forth like angry cats.

Then Sandy caught sight of Casey and Link. They had a rickety card table over which they had spread a piece of oilcloth. On the fence of the vacant lot behind them, they had attached a large, numbered wheel. It was Casey's job to spin the wheel, while Link played the role of barker. People would put coins on the numbers on the oilcloth, and then Casey would give the wheel a spin. Sometimes the passersby would win, but most of the time Link collected the money.

It was fairly dark now, and Casey said, "Aw, c'mon, that's enough for tonight." Link laughed, folded up the oilcloth and card table, and took down the wheel. He turned to Sandy. "How come you're out this way?"

"Just wandering around," Sandy replied cautiously.

"Wanna share a pizza with us?" Link asked. "We're filthy rich tonight — for a change."

When Sandy agreed, Casey said, "How about getting it at the place across the street and taking it home? I'm tired of eating it on the sidewalk. And Link — a pepperoni!" Then she added, "Actually, would you believe it, Link would make a great cook. That's our ambition, to have a restaurant of our own some day."

Home turned out to be a room in a deserted tenement. Link had provided it with electricity by tapping into the liquor store's sign next door. And as many times as the water had been turned off, Link had somehow managed to turn it back on.

"Are you out there with the wheel every night?" Sandy asked, as Link pulled the chain to light the single light bulb that hung over the sink.

"Naw," said Link, opening the pizza carton. "Some nights it's cards, some nights it's shells."

"Shells!" Sandy exclaimed. "Are they on the level?"

"None of them's on the level," Casey said dryly. "The wheel, the cards, the shells — we call them the three little switches."

"Well," Sandy remarked, relaxing in the room's only chair and enjoying his pizza, "people like to gamble; that's only human nature."

"There's no such thing as human nature," Casey remarked abruptly.

Sandy didn't forget his assignment. He realized he was being baited into an argument, but he succeeded in remaining silent.

Link and Casey, however, weren't ready to let the issue drop. "What's the matter, Sandy," Link said, with just a bit of taunt in his voice, "you think it's human nature for people to be competitive?"

Sandy couldn't resist the bait. "You're darn right!" he burst out. "Wanting to compete is only natural!"

Then he heard Casey's cool voice saying, "Sure it's only natural to want to compete. But it's also only natural to want to cooperate. We've got natural tendencies to do both, and there's nothing wrong with those tendencies. But that's where the Big Switch comes in."

"The big switch?" Sandy demanded, mystified.

Link laughed and took another portion of pizza. "That's what we call it. It happens in every society. If they have cooperative institutions, they'll claim it's because people are *born* cooperative. And if they have competitive institutions, they'll claim it's because people are *born* competitive."

"But that makes sense!" Sandy cried out. "Societies adjust their institutions to suit human nature!"

Link's voice was bitter now. "Sure, that's what people *claim* they do, so they don't have to change things and make them better. But *in fact*, although people are all born with the same tendencies, certain tendencies are rewarded and others are punished. That's why kids born into hunting tribes turn out to be warlike and kids born into peasant families turn out to be peaceful."

"And boys are taught to be aggressive and girls are taught to be docile," Casey added. "Sure they're all born with both kinds of tendencies, but society screens one kind out and the other kind in."

Link gulped down the last bit of the piece of pizza he'd been nursing. "Either way," he said, "society blames the result on human nature, never on itself. But the fact is, social institutions aren't the way they are because of human nature. It's the other way around: human beings are the way they are because of the social institutions they live in."

"That's the Big Switch," Casey said. "See, with our three little switches, we're just pikers."

"Aw, g'wan," Sandy protested. "You're exaggerating. Take what you just said. It's all wrong. Girls are *naturally* less aggressive than boys."

"You wanna bet?" Casey grinned.

And Link added, "Hey, Sandy, we finally got a rise out of you. For a while there, we thought you were scared or something."

Sandy grinned, figuring it might be a good time to explain to them why he needed their help. They looked at him appraisively as he explained his mission.

"Mark's nothin' to us," said Link. "But I could tell you this—"

"Wait!" Casey exclaimed, touching Link's knee lightly with her hand. "We'll go with you to talk to that judge. But only if you tell him beforehand what the deal is."

"What's the deal?" Sandy wanted to know.

"A job," said Casey. "Two if possible, but at least one."

A knowing grin spread across Sandy's face, and he reached out and grasped Link's hand, thumbs up. "All I can do is ask him," he said. Then he thought, "Oh, boy. what'll this be, the fourth little switch or the second big one?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

On the second visit to Bart's office, the delegation consisted of Fran, Mark, Sandy, Lisa, Link, and Casey.

Fran wasted no time getting to the point. "We've been putting it all together, and we think we can tell you now how it happened," she said. "Lisa, how about you starting?"

"I want you to understand, first of all," Lisa said to Bart, "that I would have spoken up earlier, but everything was so jumbled up in my head, I just couldn't seem to figure out what had happened.

"I was so stupid, I didn't realize how jealous Greg was. Just the same, I was uneasy about him. But let me tell you about that Friday night. I was hoping to catch Mark at the basketball game, but I wasn't sure he'd come, since he wasn't allowed to play. And I knew that, whenever he had nothing else to do in the evening, he'd go jogging for an hour or so.

"Well, I saw him leaving the stands just after the beginning of the game, but before I could reach him, he'd gotten up and gone out. When I got outside, I caught sight of him way across the athletic field, running in the direction of the high school. So I started after him, but suddenly I found Greg blocking my way. We stood there, in the middle of the athletic field, and he insisted on talking to me. What's more, although I wasn't aware of it at the time, he kept moving around so that his back was always to the gym, and my back was to the high school. Then suddenly it was as if he saw something — just like someone had given him a signal — and he ran off.

"I was so confused at that point, I didn't know what to do. It was the first time Greg had done anything to make me distrust him. I was desperate to find Mark. I had a hunch something strange was going on, but I had no idea what it might be. Since I'd last seen Mark running in the direction of the high school, I thought maybe that was where I should look for him first.

"The first thing I noticed at the high school was that there were some lights on. Maybe I'd seen them on earlier, but I wasn't paying attention at that time. Anyhow, I was looking at the lighted windows, when suddenly I saw Mark walking through one of the rooms. So I ran up to the front door. That's when I saw that it had been broken, and when I went inside, of course, I could see all the wreckage.

"I ran through the halls looking for Mark, but I couldn't find him. I was afraid of calling his name. Then suddenly I heard a car drive up outside. I went to one of the windows and looked out. It was the police.

"I could hear them coming up the steps, so I hid in a closet. Then I could hear the footsteps of someone running and of others chasing. I felt sick. I just knew that Mark had been caught, and couldn't believe anything but that he was the one who'd done all the damage. That's all I can tell you."

"I don't think we'll need you to tell us any more than that," Fran said. "Mark, how about you telling us now what happened to you?"

"It's really not much different from what I said before," Mark related. "I left the basketball game because I wanted to run around for a while and clear my head. I ran along Franklin Street for about fifteen minutes, then back along Madison Street. I thought maybe I'd go back and see the second half of the game. But as I ran by the high school, just after coming off Madison Street, I noticed the front door was broken, so I went in."

"You told me earlier," Fran remarked, "that you thought you might have flipped out, and I've heard other people say that you weren't too sure you were innocent. It sounds awfully odd. What could you tell us about that?"

"It *was* funny," Mark replied. "Did you ever have an experience where something seemed to be happening for the second time, even though you were sure it didn't? Well, that's what I thought as I was walking up the path to the front door of the high school — like it had all happened before, like it was a movie I'd once seen but I'd forgotten where. So when I saw all that mess in the lobby, for a crazy moment I began to wonder if it *could* have been me, and I just kept on wandering through the rooms, even though by that time I was convinced that I'd had nothing to do with it."

"Thanks, Mark," said Fran. "Okay, Link, it's up to you now. What can you tell us?"

"What I'm going to tell you," Link said, "isn't going to be easy for me. It's about my cousin, Freddie." Bart's eyebrows lifted, but he said nothing.

"Freddie dropped out of high school when he was seventeen, last year. He'd gotten into a fist fight with one of the teachers. I'm not going to apologize for him; Freddie had a bad temper. The judge made him do all sorts of jobs, dirty jobs, that the janitors usually do, and that really burned Freddie up. So like I said, he dropped out of school, and got a job helping out at a bowling alley. He worked there six nights a week. They liked him there. He could have had a good future — become an assistant manager some day, or something.

"But Freddie couldn't get over being mad at the school system. First thing I knew, he started bragging about having ripped up a school on the other side of town. It was on a Friday night — the only night he had free. After a while, we got to calling him "Friday Freddie," just like a nickname, you know what I mean?

"Then one night, he almost got caught. It gave him a scare. So he decided he needed a lookout. He always had friends he'd hang out with, and one of them he introduced me to — his name was Greg. Funny kind of guy; it was as if he liked excitement, but didn't want to get too much involved. He'd never have had the guts to pull anything himself."

"Where's Freddie now?" Bart asked quietly.

"That's what I'm coming to. The night after he ripped up the school over here, the very next night, there was a holdup at the bowling alley—"

Bart's eyes widened. "Oh, I remember reading about that! Was he the kid that got—"

"Right!" replied Link. "He was the kid. Stopped a bullet. It was very quick for Freddie. But then it's been quick for a lot of my friends."

"When that happened," said Casey, "Link really got shook up. He kept saying to me, 'I don't want to go that way, Casey. That's not the way I want to go.' He'd known about the others. But it never seemed real to him until it happened to Freddie. And Freddie wasn't doing nothin' that night it happened — just minding the store!"

Fran rose, and the others did likewise. But Link and Casey lingered for a few minutes to talk in hushed tones to the judge, while Fran and the others waited in the corridor. Later, as the elevator was descending, Fran looked at Lisa in one corner and Mark in the other. "Aw, c'mon," she said, "there's no reason you can't talk to each other."

Mark flushed and Lisa looked for a moment at the floor. But they touched hands — at arms' length — and retreated into their separate silences again.

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Bart got to his feet and faced the class. "I'd hoped," he began, "to be able to invite all of you to dinner some time in the next few weeks. I'd even picked out a restaurant, the Acropolis, which some of you may know — it's on Market Street. But now I'll have to ask you to give me a rain check."

There were a few "Aw's".

"My wife and I had been planning a trip to the Mediterranean," Bart continued, "but certain things have come up which require that we go immediately rather than a few months from now. So we'll be leaving this coming Saturday. Still, I'd be very honored if you'd be my guests for an hour or so."

"All you have to do is tell us where," Mickey called out.

"Well, you may know a little place that's only a few blocks from here, called "Just Desserts." They usually don't open until six, but the manager's an old friend of mine, and he said he'd open at four, just for us, this coming Friday. How about it? Is it a date?"

This time there were some "Sure's" and "You bet's".

"Oh, and one thing more," Bart added. "Please don't be surprised if my wife has little to say. She's only been in this country a short time — we were married in Athens three months ago."

Friday turned out to be blustery and wet. Even those, like Mark, who ran all the way to "Just Desserts" were soaked through by the time they got there. Each new group of arrivals would stand for a moment under the canopy that stretched out to the street from the front door, little rivulets of rain still pouring off their clothes.

"Some weather conditions, eh, Tony?" Harry said as they happened to hang their drenched coats on the same wooden peg.

"Weellll—" Tony hesitated, grinning. "some weather — yah. But the conditions, that's something else."

"Uh-uh," said Millie, "watch it, Harry. Tony's being mysterious again."

"No, not mysterious at all," Tony protested. "It's just that it's always important to distinguish something from its conditions. Like, if you touch a live wire with bare hands, then under those conditions, you'll get a shock. But when that happens you say, 'Boy, that was some shock!' You don't say, 'Boy, those were some electrical conditions'!"

"Aha!" exclaimed Casey, who had come in a few minutes before, by herself, and had been listening all the while. "So what's bad outside is the weather, not the weather conditions, right?"

"Absolutely," Millie agreed. "I know, I can enjoy a movie only if the conditions are right — no pests sitting next to me talking, stuff like that. But then, it's the movie I enjoy, not the conditions."

Everyone else had arrived by the time Bart and his wife came in, and soon they were all standing about conversing, or examining the profuse variety of hanging plants, the plaster bust of Mozart on the fluted pedestal, and the yellowed, family-album photographs, in heavy wooden frames, that were bunched at irregular intervals on the walls.

Bart's friend, the proprietor, came in wiping his hands on his apron. A large, sallow-faced man, he was Bart's age, and his name was Chet Burchfield. A moment later, another man, extremely old, and walking with some difficulty, entered and sat down in a rocking chair in a corner of the room. This, it turned out, was Mr. Burchfield's father. And then, a second later, a young girl slipped in and sat down on a high stool in another corner of the room. She had a guitar, and she began quietly plucking at the strings. Suki and Anne correctly guessed her to be Mr. Burchfield's daughter. They asked her name. "Nana," she replied almost inaudibly.

Bart introduced his wife as "Elena," and she shook hands gravely with everyone. Her black hair, lightly touched with gray, was parted severely in the center. Suki said to Harry that she didn't see how anyone could be so quiet and still and yet be so gracious. And then Anne murmured to Suki, "That smile! It's like she's sad and happy at the same time."

At length they all found seats around the three long wooden tables that had been arranged in the shape of a "U". Mr. Burchfield lit the candles on the tables, and then brought in several huge bottles of grape juice, which he announced he had made himself. The grape juice was rich and sweet, and no one could get enough of it, so more and more bottles had to be brought in.

Suddenly Bart exclaimed, "What am I thinking of? No one has offered a toast! Let me be the first: to all of you — may you live always in the spirit of justice!" Afterwards he turned to his wife and whispered something to her, to which she shook her head. Again he turned to her, and this time she raised her glass to those present, struggled to find a word or two to express her thoughts, and finally said in a heavily accented voice, "Bart has tell me about you." She raised her glass. "To you."

At that point there were menus to be examined and desserts to be chosen — everyone conscious of the absurdity and downright wickedness of having dessert *before* going home to supper. And then, in what seemed to have been only the briefest of moments, they had scraped the last of the crumbs on their plates and finished off the last of the bottles of grape juice.

"Bart," said Ms. Williams with a smile, "I think we've had our just desserts."

"But isn't that exactly what justice is?" put in Mr. Burchfield, who was wiping up some juice that had been spilled on the table in front of Millie. "Where everyone gets *just* what he deserves?"

"I don't think it can be that," observed Fran. "Justice is where everyone respects everyone else's rights."

"But, Fran," Lisa objected, "it can't be that either. How do we know for sure what people's rights *are*?"

"They're all in the Constitution!" Randy said emphatically.

"*Some* of them may be spelled out in the Constitution," Lisa replied, "in the Bill of Rights. But that doesn't mean *all* of them are there! We can keep adding to the Constitution! We may never finish spelling them out!"

When no one responded to Lisa's remark, the girl with the guitar began playing again, this time even more softly than before. Her hair concealing her eyes, she crooned a song by Bob Dylan. Mark then burst out, "There are lots of just and unjust things, but is there such a thing as justice? I mean, isn't it like the way there are lots of cases of sickness, but is there really such a thing as health?"

"I agree with Mark completely," said Fran. "People really turn me off when they talk about 'justice'. It's all so high-minded — and so vague. And yet *injustices* are so real to me I can practically taste them and smell them."

"Oh, Fran," Jill said with a laugh, "you always make everything so dramatic! But there's no need to make a big deal over all the bad things that happen in the world. Everyone knows they're there. Still and all, fair play's important too, and that's what *I* think justice is — fair play." When Fran made a face, Jill showed her annoyance and demanded, "Well, isn't it?"

Fran wasn't disturbed by Jill's challenge. She *was* disturbed, however, by her inability to meet it. She had denied that fair play and justice were the same, yet here she was, totally unable to say why they weren't. And Mark was no help. He too said nothing, except to comment, a bit sullenly, "I still say there are lots of faults in society. And although without the laws things would be worse, there are lots of ways in which the laws could be better."

"Fran," said Ms. Williams, "could you give us an example of fair play and justice being different?"

But Fran was still furious with herself. She could think of nothing to say, and she could feel the tears welling up in her eyes.

"Y'know," Ms. Williams said, "I don't know whether this would help any, but something comes back to me. I must have been in the fourth or fifth grade.

"I forget the name of the teacher, but anyhow, she came into the classroom one day with a big bag of candy. She said it was a present to the class, and that it had to be distributed *fairly*.

"We said, 'Okay, but what do you mean by fair?'

"She told us, 'Well, wouldn't the fairest thing be for me to give the most to those who deserve the most? Aren't the ones in the class who do things best the ones who deserve the most?'

"At that we all began to holler, 'No, no, that's not fair! It's not a matter of what different people can do. What's that got to do with how the candy's to be given out? Each of us is a person, and as persons we're all equal. So treat us as equals and give each of us the same amount of candy.'

"Then the teacher said to us, 'Oh, I get it now. What you're saying is that fairness is equal treatment.'

"And we all yelled back, like in a chorus, 'That's right! Fairness is equal treatment!'

"But before she had a chance to distribute the candy, the phone rang down the hall, and she was called out of the office. When she got back, a few minutes later, she found that some of the bigger kids in the class had grabbed the candy and had been fighting over it. And the biggest and strongest kids in the class each had a whole handful of candy, and some of the others had only a piece or two. The smallest ones had none at all.

"At that the teacher got really mad, and the class got very quiet. Then she said, 'You told me I should be fair. And you said fairness is treating everyone alike. All right, so that's what I'll do. I want each of you to give back one piece of candy'."

Ms. Williams paused, and Millie asked, "So what happened?"

"We each had to give back one piece," Ms. Williams said, "and that left most of us with nothing at all, so most of us were pretty upset. Yet what she made us do was equal."

"So, what's the point of the story?" Randy wanted to know.

Both Lisa and Mark answered at the same time. Lisa said, "It shows things can be equal without being fair." And Mark said, "It means there are times when it isn't *just* to treat people equally."

As Mark finished what he was saying, the girl with the guitar drew her hand quickly across the strings. The sound was loud and rasping. Another such chord followed, and another. The room was hushed as she began to sing. Her voice was harsh at first, but when she sang the refrain, as she did several times, her singing seemed to falter, and to become a combination of speaking and sobbing. Then the room was silent again.

Mrs. Bertoia whispered something to her husband, who turned and said to the group. "My wife says she knows the song well. It's a Greek lament. They still sing it in the town she comes from, in the village square." Bart toyed with his paper napkin, crumpling and smoothing it out again. Then he continued. "As many years as I've been following the law, things puzzle me." He looked at Lisa, then at Mark. "I know what you mean: so much is unfair, so much is unjust! But it's not always the fault of the law. It's simply that our whole civilization has such a long way to go.

"Things happen which we never seem able to understand — or to forget. I grew up in Sicily, near Tarentum." As Bart reminisced, it was as if the others were listening to — or overhearing — a private monologue. "I had a twin sister, just as Mark and Maria here are twins. Her name was Alicia. And then there was our cousin Nunzio, who was the same age as we were. His parents had been killed in an accident when he was quite young, and so the three of us were brought up together, just as if he was our brother. In fact, it hardly crossed our minds — Alicia's and mine — that his relationship to us was any different from our relationship to one another. What we did realize was that he was so much more promising than I was. He was so good in mathematics that everyone in the province had heard about him. As for Alicia, she wanted to sing — to sing Verdi and Puccini. And she sang beautifully.

"But we were poor — as poor as a Sicilian bricklayer, that's how the expression goes, and my father *was* a bricklayer. Already he was finding it hard to climb ladders. Soon someone would have to take over his responsibilities. But what would happen to us — to Nunzio's hopes for a career in science, to Alicia's hopes to sing opera, to me? My father never sat us down and told us in so many words. It all unfolded gradually, as it had unfolded for a hundred generations before. Alicia was married to a farmer who was considered well-to-do because he had a flock of sheep. And Nunzio was apprenticed to the bricklayers.

"Thanks to them, I was sent to school, and to America. And there hasn't been a day in my life — not a day — that I haven't wondered, why me? My merit was to have been born a boy rather than a girl like Alicia. To have had parents who lived, rather than parents who died, like Nunzio.

"By any ordinary standard, I've not been unsuccessful. Nor unhappy. But who can be happy when the condition on which he is permitted to succeed is that others, better qualified than he must fail? I can't help thinking that no one can call himself a success, in a world in which the same opportunities are not available to everyone."

Mrs. Bertoia leaned her head for a moment on her husband's shoulder. Then Mr. Burchfield came in with more grape juice— to everyone's delight, since they'd assumed no more would be forthcoming.

A defiant chord came from the guitar, and the girl on the stool, her hair still tumbling down over her eyes, launched into an Israeli folk song, at once bitter and proud, mournful and defiant. Soon students and adults alike were slapping the table in time to the rhythm of the music.

From the corner came the voice of Mr. Burchfield's father. It was stronger than they expected it to be from someone so old. "I've been listening to all of you wondering out loud about what's just and what's not just. And it occurs to me—"

Here he was interrupted by cries of "Come closer! Come closer!" So he moved to the table and sat down in the empty chair between Mickey and Fran. "As I was saying," he continued, "these things you've been talking about are things I've wondered about all my life. And since those of you who're a little older are telling stories to those of you who're a little younger —" (here Bart couldn't repress a smile) "I wonder if you'd mind my adding a recollection of my own."

"Be our guest," said Mickey.

"I grew up in Tennessee," he began, "and my father was a miner. He'd been working in the mines just twenty years when he died. He was thirty-five at the time. Since I was the oldest, and there were four other kids besides me, I went down to the mine office to see about a job."

"At fifteen?" Laura asked, incredulously.

"I would have gone to work there the following year anyhow, so it wasn't something I wasn't expecting." Mr. Burchfield coughed, then continued. "Anyhow, the president of the mine, Mr. Taylor, happened to be there when I knocked at the door. He was considered a rather nice man. I went in and asked if I could replace my father at the mine.

"Mr. Taylor said, 'Sure, Ty, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll pay you the same as he was getting, two dollars a week, even though it'll be a couple of months before you really learn your job. Now, son, how do you like *that*?'

"I said, 'Mr. Taylor, y'know, I'm real grateful. But we can't hardly hold our skin and our bones together on that two dollars a week.'

"He told me, 'It's the same wage everyone gets.'

"I said, 'Sure, maybe a man by himself can live on it. But if you've got four or five other mouths to feed, what are you supposed to do? What happens is that nobody gets enough to eat. I think that's why my father got so sick — all he ever would take was a couple pieces of bread and a bowl of soup each day.'

"Mr. Taylor told me that if people had kids, that was their business, not his. So I said, 'Well, okay, but look, there's another thing that bothers me. You're going to pay me the regular weekly wage, which is just about enough to keep a person alive. But how do you calculate the price you sell coal for?'

"He said he didn't much care to talk about the price of coal, so I said,'okay, let's talk about the price of lumber. That's your lumber mill alongside town, right?'He said it was, so I went on, 'Now, when you figure the price of lumber, you take into account the costs of running your lumber mill, like labor and taxes and all that, right?' He just stared at me, like he thought I was crazy. Then I said, 'But you also figure into the selling price what it costs to grow the trees, don't you? I mean, when you cut down a tree, you replace it with a sapling, and you have to count in what it costs you to plant that sapling, right? And to care for it while it's growing up, right?'

"Mr. Taylor just sat there scowling at me, not saying yes or no. He wanted to see where I was headed, I guess. But I must have been pretty shook up over my father's dying, you know, so I wasn't thinking about the trouble I might be getting myself into. I just said, 'Well, Mr. Taylor, I'm pretty much like that sapling. If you want to replace my father with me, you should pay not only for what it costs to keep me alive, but for the costs of my development too — ever since I was born'!"

"I'll bet he really exploded when you told him that," said Fran.

"Oh, did he ever! 'Your development costs?' he yelled. 'What are those?'

"I said, 'The cost of feeding me since I was born, paying my doctor bills, and paying for my clothing, things like that.' He said that wasn't *his* problem, it was my father's. So I said, 'Look, Mr. Taylor, one of us, either my father or me, should be paid back for the cost of my development, and just like if you developed a new product, you'd have to figure in your research costs, so I think we're entitled to my development costs. It shouldn't come out of our wages — our wages just barely keep us alive. They don't pay for the costs of my growing up.' Well, to make a long story short, he wouldn't hire me after that — called me a trouble-maker — and I had to find work elsewhere."

"You had a good argument," Millie remarks appreciatively.

"Aw, Millie," Randy exclaims. "That's just one side of the story. Anyhow, it all happened a long time ago. Things like that don't happen nowadays. People today get what they're entitled to — no more, no less."

"So, as you see it, Randy," Ms. Williams asks, "our society today is a just one?"

"That's right!" Randy repeats emphatically. "Our society today is a just one. We get what we deserve. And if some people have more, it's because they deserve more."

"Oh, sure," says Luther.

The girl on the stool in the corner swings her guitar onto her lap. The musical accompaniment now hovers sparse and simple in the background. All that seems to matter is the song, which is a spiritual familiar to everyone in the room.

"I don't think," Mark says slowly, breaking the silence, "that justice is the same as fair play. And it's not the same as having all your rights."

"Oh, I don't know," Tony replies. "Insofar as people are equals, they should be treated alike. And insofar as they're different — and the differences matter somehow — then they should be treated differently."

Mark looks exasperated. "You're not getting my point! You keep talking about what's fair, and that's not what I'm talking about."

"Well," Ms. Williams asks, "what *are* you talking about, Mark?"

Mark shakes his head, but Fran says, "I've been thinking about it ever since we got here. Don't you remember, we were talking then about the difference between weather and weather conditions? Isn't it something like that?"

Suki nods vigorously. "That's right, Fran. You're on the right track. Look, my grandfather — you remember, he's a farmer — well, he told me something the last time he visited us. He said, suppose you plant two trees — like those saplings Mr. Burchfield was talking about. And one you stick in stony soil, and don't give it much water or sunlight. But the other one you put in fertile soil, with lots of plant food and fertilizer, and lots of water and sunlight. Isn't it a fact one's going to do well and the other won't?"

"Sure," Millie agrees, "one will grow up strong, and the other will always be a weakling."

"But was it because one of them started out as a weakling, and the other didn't?" Fran demands. "Was it that one sapling had more initiative than the other, or more talent or more perseverence?"

"That's it!" Mark exclaims. "The trees may have started out equal as trees, but they were exposed to different conditions!"

"So it's just like Ms. Williams was saying," Lisa puts in. "Equality isn't enough. Fair play isn't enough."

"What I want to see in my garden at home," says Suki, "is as many blooms as possible. Some plants need shade and some need sun. Some need lots of water and some only a little. But I don't punish certain ones because they require different conditions, especially when their blooms are so different, and all blooms are beautiful. The object is to help plants bloom, not just to make them hardy. And it's the same with people, isn't it?"

The girl with the guitar gets off the stool and brushes the hair back from her eyes.

Bart stands up. It's a signal that Mr. Burchfield needs some time to clean up his tables and re-set them for the evening guests. But Lisa still wants to talk. "So Suki," she says, "when plants bloom, is that the same thing as people being free?"

Suki looks at Lisa expectantly but says nothing.

"I mean," Lisa goes on, "To bloom, like you said, plants need certain conditions."

"Fertilizer," Randy interrupts sarcastically.

"Okay," Lisa says, unperturbed. "And likewise, for people to be free, there have to be certain conditions."

Suki nods. Mark intervenes: "And the name of those conditions is *justice*."

"In a good society," says Fran, "everything rests on justice. It's the foundation. Fair play — why that's nothing more than the tip of the iceberg."

Bart frowns. "The law's not foundation enough?"

"The law's not enough," says Fran.

"Not for justice," adds Mark, "and not for freedom, either."

"Justice guarantees freedom in a society," says Lisa.

"And the lack of justice," says Harry, "guarantees the lack of freedom."

Just then someone emerges from the kitchen wearing a white apron, and holding a salad plate in one hand and a dish towel in the other. It's Link. Casey is alongside him in a second. "You look great!" she beams. "You look absolutely scrumptious!"

Ms. Williams turns to Bart. "Do you still think there's something mysteriously different about kids?"

"I guess they're no more mysterious than the rest of us," he answers.

Fran acknowledges Bart's words with a nod and a smile, although she says nothing. And Mark observes, "I guess what matters is not just how people actually live in a society, but what has to be done so that they can live well." He looks across the table at

Mr. Burchfield's father.

"Better the conditions," Mr. Burchfield's father remarks. "Live well."

Suki laughs. "Live well, right. And doesn't that mean being able to do what you think best to do?"

"It means," Mark responds, "a society in which doing and thinking are connected: where those who act think, and those who think act."

"You haven't told me how you're going to make it happen," Bart says softly.

"Ah, that's what we have to think about," Mark replies.

Ms. Williams adjusts her glasses, peers at Mark for a moment, then says, "Well then, I'd better start thinking right now about what we can do next year in my social studies course!"

As Mark comes out of "Just Desserts," he finds that the rain has stopped and that the heavy clouds, although still in sight, are beginning to disperse. He pauses for a moment under the canopy. Sunlight is beginning to filter through the leaves of the trees, still dripping from the heavy downpour.

Mark begins to jog homewards. But jogging doesn't seem quite right. He breaks into a trot. His head is clear now, and he feels light and free: it's as if, all at once, not a thing stands in his way.

He begins to run.